

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

HARRY E. WOLFF, PUBLISHER, 166 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK.

No. 1074.

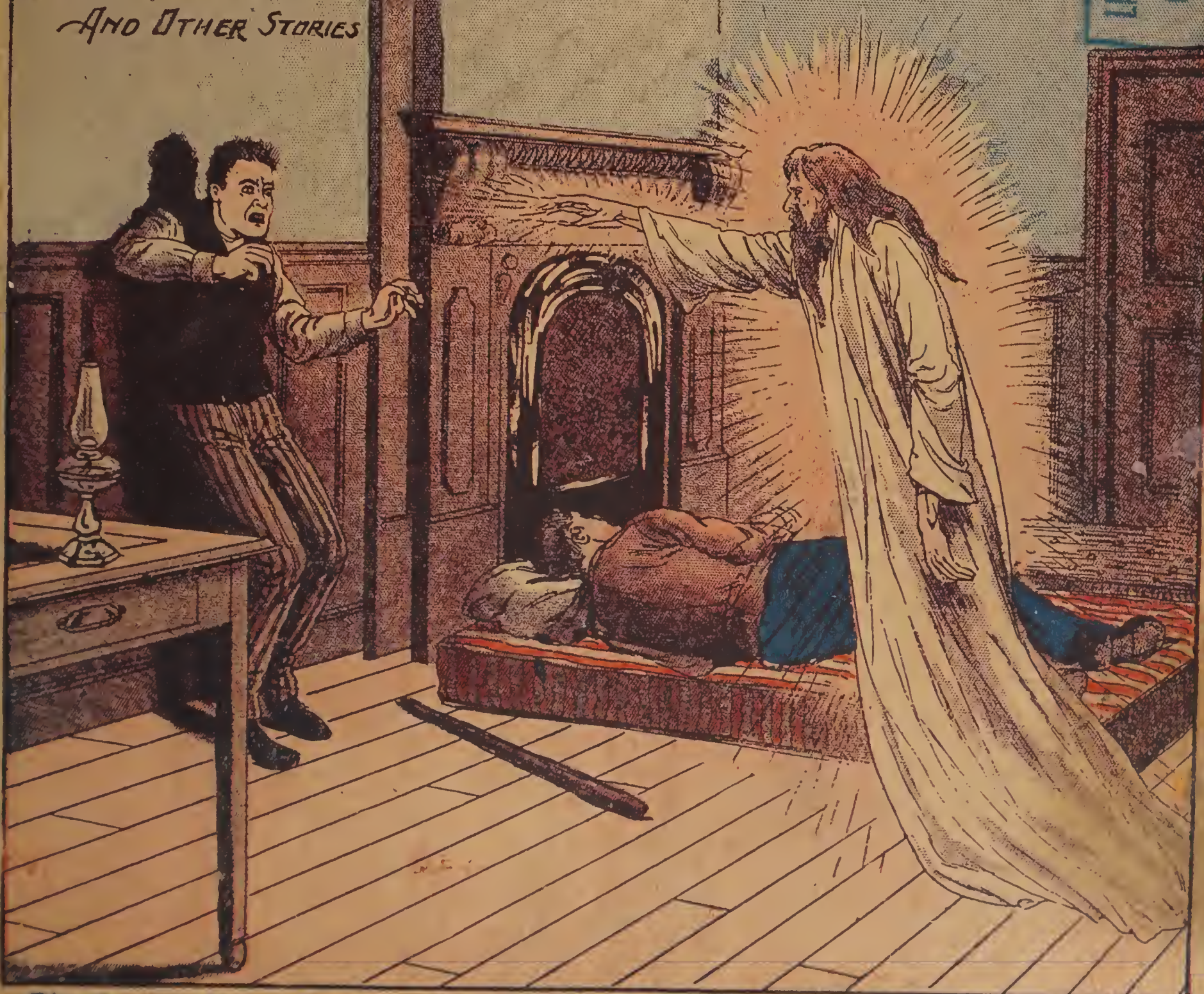
NEW YORK, JANUARY 1, 1919.

Price 6 Cents

THE HAUNTED HOUSE ON THE HARLEM; OR, THE MYSTERY OF A MISSING MAN.

By HOWARD ABSTIN.

AND OTHER STORIES



Directly at his feet a tall, stately creature seemed to rise as though coming out of the very floor. It was a man, although dressed in a long robe of dazzling whiteness and glittering from a thousand flaming points.

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STORIES OF ADVENTURE

Issued Weekly—Subscription price, \$3.00 per year; Canada, \$3.50; Foreign, \$4.00. Harry E. Wolff, Publisher, 166 West 23d Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as Second-Class Matter, February 10, 1913, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

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The Haunted House on the Harlem

—OR—

THE MYSTERY OF A MISSING MAN

By HOWARD AUSTIN

CHAPTER I.

FIRST VISIT TO THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

"Good-by! Good-by, Miss Edith."

"Good-by, Mr. Willing!"

"Good-by, Mrs. Grassland. I shall send you my address as I promised."

"Do so by all means, Mr. Willing. We shall expect you to call on us just as soon as we are settled."

"Which I shall certainly do, Mrs. Grassland."

"Oh, it's Edith you will call on. You needn't look at me, Mr. Willing."

"I beg your pardon. I——"

"Carriage is all ready, madam," said the hack driver engaged by Jack Willing to convey Mrs. Grassland and her daughter to the hotel, stepping up to the group and making his announcement for the third time at least.

And it was the last.

Jack Willing helped Mrs. Grassland and her pretty daughter into the carriage and they were driven rapidly off the White Star Line pier.

"Upon my word, you have managed to shake them at last," grumbled Mr. Butterman, a New York attorney. "I thought you would never get through saying good-by, young man. Come now and dine with me at the Astor House. We will talk over our matters there."

Half an hour later Jack Willing and Mr. Butterman found themselves in the full enjoyment of an Astor House dinner.

To Jack, who had just come from Paris, where he had been since his fourteenth year, under the strict discipline of a private military school, the voyage, the flirtation with pretty Edith Grassland, the flattery of her widowed mother, and the obsequiousness of Mr. Butterman, who had met him on the pier, were all novelties, and very interesting ones.

At Rouveysol's Academie Militaire, Jack had been knocked about with the rest of the boys, and, indeed, had fared harder than most others in some particulars, for, be it known, that Jack was a mystery unto himself.

From his earliest recollection he had been pushed about from one English school to another, never knowing anything more about himself than his name, and never quite sure of that, and that somebody paid his bills regularly, until one day he received a letter from Mr. Butterman, informing him that he was to come to New York by the next steamer and enter college in America, adding the pleasing information that at his majority he would come into a large estate.

Now the day on which Jack Willing landed in New York happened to be his birthday. He was just eighteen.

This, briefly told, was Jack's entire history, so far as it was known to himself.

"Young man," said Mr. Butterman, in his slow, pompous way, "are you aware that a great future lies before you? I hold in my hands the title deeds to real estate amounting to more than a million which will be yours just three years from to-day."

"I'm sure it was a great surprise to me, sir, when I got your letter," answered Jack, not knowing what else to say.

"Providing," continued Mr. Butterman, solemnly, "that one piece of information concerning you can be gained."

Jack's countenance fell.

There was a hitch there, it seemed. He had not been prepared for this.

"What's the nature of the information, sir?" he asked anxiously.

"Its nature is of the highest importance. It is the proof of your birth. It is legal evidence, showing that you actually are Jack Willing, and not somebody else."

"Well, I'm sure I'm nobody else, but myself, sir."

"Technically I am equally sure, since I have had the pleasure of paying your bills for the last eighteen years; legally it is different. It is necessary to find a certain paper. This, it has been promised, shall be forthcoming on your arrival. As soon as you are through your dinner we are to go to a certain house, where I hope to receive the paper. If it is so received, well and good. If not——"

Here Mr. Butterman paused.

"Well, sir, what will happen in that case?" asked Jack, after waiting a moment.

"In that case," said Mr. Butterman, slowly, "I shall not feel justified in advancing any more money on your account until it is received, and I shall advise you to seek a position where you can earn your own living."

"But——"

"Pardon me, I can say no more just now."

"But at least you can tell me who I am, who my parents were; why——"

"Pardon me. Those are the very things I cannot tell."

Nor did he tell.

Mr. Butterman showed his readiness to talk about anything and everything but these points, the very ones upon which Jack was most anxious to be informed.

After dinner, the lawyer called a carriage, and, in company with Jack, started uptown.

"The house we are going to," he said, "is an old mansion situated on the north bank of the Harlem, nearly opposite the McComb's Dam bridge. It is a part of what I suppose to be your property. Indeed, I don't see any reason why I should not tell you that it was built by your great grandfather, and is the old family mansion. As I understand it, you were born in that house, but for years it has been closed up. Let me add that in common with the rest of the property it is not altogether in my charge, but is looked after by an agent. The reason it is not rented is owing to the evil reputation it bears. In short, it is said to be haunted. As a sensible man, I do not believe in such things, and I trust you do not, either. That is all I have to say."

And it was quite enough to excite Jack's curiosity, but not another word could he get out of Mr. Butterman upon the subject of this mysterious house.

Altogether Jack found his spirits falling, and by the time

they had crossed the Harlem he began to feel very much depressed.

Soon they found themselves running abreast of a high stone wall, with a heavy growth of trees behind.

In a few moments they came to a gateway, through which the carriage turned, and following a broad, ancient-looking mansion built of gray stone.

The month was May, the year—but no matter about that; it was some years ago—and the hour just at sunset.

Instructing the driver to wait, Mr. Butterman alighted, and bidding Jack follow him, opened the big front door with a huge brass key, which he drew from his trousers' pocket.

"He even knows how long it has been since that door was opened before," he said. "Gloomy old barracks, ain't it? I don't wonder nobody wants to live here. I wouldn't take it rent free!"

"I suppose it can be hired very cheap?" ventured Jack, not knowing what to say.

"On the contrary, I believe the agent asks an exorbitant rent for it," replied Mr. Butterman. "If I was possessed of any real power in the matter I would have pulled it down long ago, and cut the grounds into building lots. Why, it's worth a small fortune! But come, let's go upstairs."

The house was unfurnished, and everything thick with dust.

Wonderingly Jack followed the lawyer up the broad staircase to the floor above.

Being an open, free-hearted fellow by nature, Jack did not relish the mystery in which he now found himself involved, but what could he do?

Clearly there was nothing to be done but to stick close to Mr. Butterman, for better or for worse.

Even the lawyer seemed rather nervous, and stood looking this way and that when they reached the landing, where the last rays of the setting sun penetrated dimly through the window at the end of the long passage.

"I am trying to make out which room I am to enter," he said, waving his hand generally at a number of doors which opened off the passage. "Let me see, I have a letter of instruction here, if there's light enough left to read it by." He walked to the end of the passage and producing a letter perused its contents in the failing light.

"This is the door," he said, returning. "Now then, Jack, your fate hangs upon what I find in this room. Wait for me a moment and it will all be settled."

Whereupon Mr. Butterman opened the first door from the stairs on the right hand side of the passage, and closing it carefully behind him, disappeared within the room.

It was a momentous moment for Jack Willing.

Burning with impatience, he stood waiting for Mr. Butterman's return.

But it was not written in Jack's book of destiny that he should wait long without further mystery.

Three minutes elapsed, perhaps four; the gloomy passage had grown a shade darker, when all at once a strange sound burst from the room into which Mr. Butterman had passed.

It was a wild cry; a cry suggestive of some lost soul in agony. It echoed through the long passage dismally, dying away in the distance only to be followed by a wild demoniacal laugh.

Jack was terribly frightened.

His breath almost ceased. His very hair seemed to rise in horror.

To save himself from perdition he could not have moved a foot beyond where he stood.

What could it be?

Ghosts?

Ghosts are popularly supposed to wait until the midnight hour.

"Something has happened to Mr. Butterman in that room," thought Jack. "If I don't go to his help I'm a coward. It will take more than that to scare me!"

He boldly seized the knob and opened the door.

Now, something certainly had happened to Mr. Butterman, but what it was Jack Willing did not find out then.

Nothing but emptiness met his gaze as he entered the room.

It was a large, unfurnished apartment into which he had penetrated.

There was dust and cobwebs in plenty, but no Mr. Butterman.

There was no other door than the one by which the lawyer had entered, and each of the window sashes was found to be nailed securely.

The long and short of the matter was Mr. Butterman had vanished.

He had entered this room, but he did not come out again. Strangely, mysteriously, the lawyer had disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

SECOND VISIT TO THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

"Young man, do you know that there is something very strange in all you tell me?"

"It is very strange to me," replied Jack Willing, meeting the steady gaze of Harry Halstead, the rising young detective of the — Agency, unflinchingly. "If you doubt my having told you the truth, sir, you had better not take up the case."

"Not at all; not at all!"

"No; not at all."

"I don't mean that. I mean that I do not doubt your having told me the truth at all, but will have to get at the truth somehow. Here's this man Butterman missing for three days; left his business, his family; everything in confusion, and no reason for his disappearance. Is that not strange?"

"Very; but I'm as badly affected by it as any one can be. Here I am, a stranger in New York, with only a few dollars in my pocket. What am I to do?"

"I thought you said you were rich?"

"So Mr. Butterman told me, but where is Mr. Butterman?"

"Sure enough. But his clerk?"

"Knows nothing of his affairs or mine."

"The agent for this estate?"

"I do not even know his name, nor does Mr. Butterman's clerk."

"Well, it's a strange business. However, I am willing to try my hand at the case. I'll meet you—let me see—I'll meet you at the haunted house at four o'clock."

"Do you propose to begin operations there?"

"Yes."

"But the whole place has been searched thoroughly, first by the hackman and myself, again by the police."

"Can't help it. That's where Mr. Butterman disappeared, and that is where I shall begin my search for him. Be on hand, Mr. Willing, and you'll not find me behind time."

Jack Willing found himself in a bad fix the day he had this interview with Detective Harry Halstead at the rooms of the agency.

He had not a friend in New York; no, not one in America.

He was nothing but a boy after all, and after having left the French school, and come three thousand miles on the assurance of Mr. Butterman that he was worth at least a million, it was a pretty serious matter to have the old lawyer suddenly disappear like this.

After searching the house that night in company with the hack driver, Jack applied to the police.

Nothing came of it.

Mr. Butterman was a man of no more prominence than a thousand other lawyers in New York.

There was no money in the case, consequently the police took no interest in it.

Jack was finally informed that the story of his wealth was probably a "fake," and Mr. Butterman had probably run away for reasons best known to himself.

Next Jack hunted up Mrs. Butterman, and they conferred together.

He found her a very dull person, with no knowledge whatever of her husband's affairs, but out of this came the engagement of Harry Halstead, the detective, as bright a man as Jack could have had if he had known New York like a book.

Even Mrs. Grassland and her daughter, who had shown Jack so much attention on the voyage out, seemed to have vanished.

Twice Jack sent his card to the address the widow had given him, but no invitation came to call.

At four o'clock that afternoon Jack Willing met Harry Halstead, the detective, on the steps of the haunted house.

"Hello, young man!" exclaimed Harry, in his hearty way.

"You're on time, I see."

"Yes, sir," answered Jack.

"Needn't 'sir' me. I'm only a few years older than you are. Have you got the key to this old barn?"

"Here it is."

"Wonder the police didn't take it from you."

"So they did, but they gave it back again."

"You came with them when they made their examination?"

"No, I didn't. They kept me in the station house for four hours. I thought at one time they were going to say I murdered Mr. Butterman."

"Do you know," said Harry Halstead, as he turned the key in the lock, "you were very lucky not to get caught in that trap. However, you escaped it, and— Hello, who have we here?"

"Beware! Beware!" croaked a cracked voice behind them. "Many a man has gone in through that door, good gentlemen, who never came out again. Beware!"

"Why, you horrible old witch! What are you giving us?" cried the young detective lightly. "Be off with you! One sight of your ugly face is enough to scare the crows."

At the foot of the steps stood the hideous old crone who had spoken.

Clothed in filthy rags, bent nearly double with age, and with face horribly wrinkled, she certainly deserved the imputation the detective cast upon her in one sense of the word.

But it is not right to make sport of the aged and unfortunate, and punishment is sure to follow to those who do so.

"Hush! Hush!" whispered Jack. "She's some poor old wretch who has strayed into the grounds."

But before Jack had time to say any more the old woman had fully shown that so far as her tongue went she was able to take care of herself, for she began abusing them furiously.

"Go on! Go on!" she screamed, after calling them names which we should not care to write. "Go on! You'll be swallowed up like the rest. Ha, ha, ha! You wouldn't listen to the warning of old Lize! No, no! Go your ways and I'll go mine! Ho ho!"

She hobbled along among the shrubbery, shaking her stick at them, and disappeared from view.

"Wretched old tramp!" sneered the detective. "It only goes to show what a bad name this house has got. I'll bet you what you like it's a hangout for some gang or another. They won't get me as they got Mr. Butterman, though. Now, you see."

"You'd better be careful," said Jack. "I'm sure of one thing. Mr. Butterman had no more idea of vanishing than you have now."

"I ain't so sure of that. There's always a key to unlock every mystery. There's a key to the mystery of this missing man, you can just bet."

"If we could only lay our hands on it."

"Which we must try to do. Remember, this is broad daylight. We needn't be afraid of ghosts now. Show me the room where Mr. Butterman disappeared, young man, and we'll start in and look for our clue."

Now, there's nothing like self-confidence, and Harry Halstead was possessed of plenty of that commodity.

He led the way upstairs as bold as brass, and when Jack showed him the door of the fatal room he opened it and went straight in.

"So this is the place?"

"This is the place."

"Upon my word, I don't see where he went to."

"That's just it."

"His footsteps might have been traced in this dust easy enough if it hadn't been trodden all over by you and the hackman and the police and a dozen others, until there's no telling one footprint from another. I suppose you never once thought of noticing them when you first came in?"

"No."

"More's the pity. Let's see, let's see. Only one door—window all nailed down, nothing left but the chimney, unless—hello, what's that?"

Rat-tat-tat! Rat-tat-tat!

Someone was knocking on the door, and what was more, knocking away the fireboard of the chimney at the time.

Jack advanced to the door rather gingerly.

Had some one followed them into the house?"

Perhaps it is the old woman again," he thought, as he threw the door wide open.

"Why, there's no one here!" he exclaimed. "What can it mean?"

The passage was quite empty, but what struck Jack strangely still was the fact that no answer came from Detective Halstead.

With his hand still holding the door knob he turned to ascertain the reason of this.

To his utter astonishment he found that Harry Halstead had vanished.

He stood in the mysterious room alone.

CHAPTER III.

THIRD VISIT TO THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

"Mrs. Grassland presents her compliments to Mr. Willing, and would be pleased to have him call, taking this opportunity to inform him that she has engaged the old Manor House on the Harlem, known as Beechwood, which she has fitted up with every modern convenience for summer boarders, etc."

This is the way the letter began, and it ended up in a careful description of the situation of Mrs. Grassland's summer boarding-house, so that Jack Willing could not possibly offer as an excuse for not accepting the invitation his inability to find the place.

"Well, upon my word, the post-office people did well to trace me out!" exclaimed Jack, as he folded up the letter. "I don't believe they could have done it in Paris. Well, it is unnecessary to say I'll call, and what's more I'll call this very night."

A full month had elapsed since Jack's second visit to the haunted house on the Harlem, and matters had assumed a very bad shape for our young friend during that time.

It was all owing to the strange disappearance of Harry Halstead, the detective.

Without spending time doing dry details, let us state that from the moment when Jack turned to answer the knock at the door of that fatal room, Harry Halstead had been seen no more.

It was very mysterious—very puzzling.

Not a trace of the detective could be found, and Jack, who did the only thing he could do under the circumstances, went to the police and got into a peck of trouble for his pains.

They locked the boy up, and kept him in jail for three weeks.

Meanwhile, the missing detective was sought for in every direction, and the haunted house ransacked from cellar to roof.

Nothing came of it.

Detective and lawyer had vanished alike, and when at last Jack Willing was set free, for, of course, nothing could be proved against him, he found himself in a bad fix.

His funds were about all gone; a cloud of suspicion hung over him. He had not one friend in all New York to turn to, he sought employment in vain.

On this Saturday night, just as he was beginning to get desperate, there came to the cheap boarding-house at which he was staying this letter from Mrs. Grassland.

No wonder the boy was eager to accept the invitation, for he had come back to his room almost beside himself with anxiety, having less than five dollars left of the money Mr. Butterman had sent him.

Moreover, Jack thought he was in love with Edith Grassland, and had been in the lowest depths of despair when he felt that he should never again see the pretty blonde, who had flirted with him on the passage out. So taken altogether, Jack lost no time in making for Harlem.

He had to go by the Eighth avenue horse cars, for there were no elevated railroads in those days, and a long, tedious trip he found it.

In fact, it was half-past seven o'clock when he finally located Beechwood.

Judge of his tremendous surprise at finding that it was none other than his haunted house.

He could scarcely understand it, yet there it was.

The gate had been repaired, the shrubbery trimmed, the walk weeded.

When he reached the broad piazza the windows were wide open, and lace curtains fluttered behind them. The big front door was open, too, and a handsome hanging lamp burned in the hall, while on the mat lay a big Newfoundland dog, who gave his tail a wag of welcome as Jack approached.

In fact, but one room in the front of the house was dark, and that was the one in which the mysterious disappearances had taken place.

Jack rang the bell, and was promptly admitted by the colored man who appeared in answer.

He had not taken three steps along the carpeted hall, when Edith, all in white, came flying down the stairs and gave him a warm welcome.

Mrs. Grassland followed more sedately, but her welcome was just as hearty.

She had taken the house for the summer, furnished it from top to bottom, at great expense, and just moved in.

There were no boarders yet, it seemed, in spite of advertisements in all the papers.

In fact, Mrs. Grassland appeared to be rather discouraged. Jack thought he could have explained why, but so kindly did the ladies receive him that he hadn't the heart to say a word.

The next thing in order was to be asked to supper, and following this came an invitation to stop over Sunday, for this happened to be Saturday night.

It is hardly necessary to say that these invitations were accepted.

Jack passed a delightful evening.

Edith played on the grand piano, and sang sweetly, Jack joining her.

At eleven, Mrs. Grassland retired, leaving the young folks still singing in the parlor.

Before Jack fully realized the peculiarity of his situation the clock on the mantel chimed out the midnight hour.

Edith was singing an old song which Jack had specially asked for, and the young man was bending over the piano ready to turn the leaves, when all at once a hoarse voice rang out behind them.

"Ha, ha, ha! This is a pretty how to do! A pretty how to do! Go upstairs, young people, and look in the haunted room. Dinner's all ready, and waiting for you. Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!"

It kept right straight up to the last word, and not a soul to be seen.

Meanwhile, Edith had screamed and sank half-fainting into Jack's arms.

When Jack dashed out upon the piazza, there was no one there either.

Edith followed him, trembling from head to foot.

"Oh, Mr. Willing, who could it have been?"

"I'm sure I cannot tell, Edith. The voice seemed to come out of empty space. I could see no one."

"Nor I."

"Do you know——"

"What?"

"I am going to obey that voice. I want to look in the room overhead."

"Oh, but you mustn't!"

"Why?"

"Because——"

"Because what, Edith?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Mr. Willing, we got this house cheap for the summer, because it has the reputation of being haunted. Mamma promised that room should not be opened, for that's where the ghosts are supposed to be."

But this only made Jack more determined.

There could no longer be excuse for silence.

As they stood there on the piazza he told Edith his own experiences in the house.

"Oh, dear me! What shall we do? We will never get any one to board with us, Mr. Willing."

"Perhaps you may. I know what I'm going to do, though."

"You are determined?"

"To go to that room—yes."

"But it is locked."

"Have you the key?"

"It hangs on a nail outside."

"Come, then—let us do it."

It was strange how Jack persisted.

Something seemed to impel him to obey that mysterious voice.

In the end he persuaded Edith, and they ascended the stairs together. Jack took the key from the nail and fitted it in the lock.

"If you want to go back to the parlor now is your time," Jack said. "As for me, I have begun this thing, and I am going to see it through."

"No, no. I wouldn't go back downstairs alone for anything; but I tell you there's nothing in the room."

"You've been in there then?"

"Yes, indeed."

"But——"

Ding-a-ling! Ding-a-ling!

Right in the midst of Jack's sentence a bell rang out behind the door of the mysterious chamber, which an instant

later was thrown open by invisible hands, revealing a sight startling enough to scare even Jack Willing.

Instead of the dusty chamber he had seen before, the room was elegantly furnished, not as a chamber at all, but as a dining-room.

Through the center ran a long table covered with a white cloth, fine china, silverware, etc., and fairly groaning beneath a spread of roast meats, choice vegetables, fruits and pastry.

Edith gave one gasp and clutched Jack by the arm.

"Look—look!" she breathed, in a frightened whisper, at the same time pointing to the floor just within the threshold.

Jack's eyes turned from the table, around which he had discovered stood just thirteen chairs.

To his added amazement, he saw the figure of a colored man, wearing a snow-white apron, suddenly rise up before him as if from out of the floor.

"Young leddy an' ge'man, de dinner am serbed," he said, waving his hand toward the table.

To save him Jack could not have spoken now, but his eyes followed the movement of the hand.

Where the chairs had been empty before, each was now filled.

Filled—yet not filled; for above each floated the head and bust of a man, or a woman, while below there was nothing but empty space.

It was all horribly real, too!

At the head of the table floated the bust of an elderly man with a snow-white head.

Next to him was half of a handsome young lady, one hand plying a fan, while Jack could see the wall where her body ought to have been and the empty chair beneath.

So it was all around the table, first a gentleman, then a lady, in a half length, as it were.

They seemed to be talking to each other and laughing, yet not a sound could be heard, when all at once Edith, with a loud scream, fell fainting into Jack's arms.

Presto—change!

Like a flash all had vanished!

Before Jack's eyes now was nothing but the empty room with its cobwebs and dust!

CHAPTER IV.

ANOTHER STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

More disturbed for the moment by the sudden fainting of Edith Grassland than by all the ghosts of the haunted chamber, Jack did what any sensible young fellow would have done under the circumstances—took the girl up in his arms and carried her out of the room just as fast as he could possibly go.

What was to be done?

To call out and wake up Mrs. Grassland might make things decidedly unpleasant.

Who could tell what a smart, self-assertive woman like the widow might do if she were suddenly to come out of her room and find her daughter in Jack's arms?

The bare thought of such a contingency made Jack lay Edith down upon the sofa as soon as he got into the parlor to which he carried the girl with all possible speed.

Then, to his surprise, Edith revived immediately, and sat up, looking so bright, that in spite of his devotion Jack began to wonder whether she had actually fainted or not.

"Oh, Mr. Willing, wasn't it terrible?" breathed Edith, seizing Jack's arm and clinging to him convulsively.

"It is the strangest thing in the world, Edith. Stranger than you have any idea of. I—I haven't told you all."

It was a moment for mutual confidence, being after midnight, and the circumstances so very strange.

It is not to be wondered at that Jack told Edith all about the strange old mansion—all about his own strange experiences in it, we mean—and the result was anything but pleasant, for Edith began to cry, and went into regular hysterics then and there on the parlor sofa.

Jack was in a terrible pickle to know what to do, and had just about made up his mind that this time Mrs. Grassland really must be called, when all at once Edith was herself again.

"Oh, Jack!" she said gaspingly, "what is to be done? Nobody will ever come to board with us in this dreadful house."

"I'm afraid not, Edith," replied Jack. "Hadn't you better go to bed?"

"No, no! I could never go to sleep if I did. Just think of it, Jack, poor mamma has spent her last cent in furniture and advertising, and now we shall have to go. Oh, we shall certainly have to go!"

"I don't see how you can stay if this sort of thing is going to continue, Edith."

"No, no! Of course we can't. But it's all so strange. I can scarcely realize it now. I can't believe we really did see what we thought we saw, and where did they all go to? One moment they were there. The next when I looked for them they had all vanished. Was that the way it seemed to you, Jack?"

"Just the way, Edith."

"It looked to me as though each chair had half a person floating over it."

"To me, too. I saw it just the same. But come, you had better go to bed, or at least, call your mother. It's getting very late."

"Oh, I couldn't call mamma. She'd be frightened to death. Don't think me crazy, Jack, but do you know what I'm just going to do?"

"What?"

"To see the inside of that room again."

"Oh, I wouldn't go there, Edith. Just think of what I have told you. Think of Mr. Butterman—of the detective. Edith, I didn't like to tell you before, but I tell you now. I've been in prison for weeks on account of Detective Halstead's disappearance. If anything should happen to you, I don't know what I should do."

"Still I want to go, Jack. I must go! Something seems drawing me to that room."

She did not seem to understand what he was saying.

It was no use to oppose her.

The more Jack protested against it, the more Edith insisted, and when a woman insists she usually gets her own way, as everybody knows.

At last Jack yielded, and taking the lamp with them, the two went upstairs and paused before the door of the haunted room.

"Don't do it, Edith. Think again!" pleaded Jack.

"No, I'm going in. Open the door."

Jack sighed and gave it up.

This time the door was not locked, and Jack, anxious to be done with the disagreeable business, flung it wide open.

The haunted chamber was just as they had last left it. Not a trace of all they had seen before was visible now.

"Come, let us get out!" cried Jack. "We mustn't stay here."

"Just a minute," said Edith, who was walking about here and there, with her eyes everywhere.

"Edith! Edith!" called Mrs. Grassland's voice suddenly, from outside the door.

Now, upon hearing Mrs. Grassland call, Jack very naturally looked toward the door.

"Come, Edith," he whispered. "There's your mother, Come!"

There was no answer, and Jack instantly looked around again.

To his intense horror, Edith had vanished. He stood in the haunted chamber alone.

It was a fearful shock. Words fail us when we attempt to describe it.

The room was not so large but what Jack could see every part of it at a glance.

Here was the third mysterious disappearance.

Hardly knowing what he did, Jack rushed out, and darting to the door of Mrs. Grassland's chamber, pounded upon it like a madman, for when he got into the hall the widow was not visible, nor did he expect to see her. He felt that the voice was but a delusion.

It was the same dreadful business of the haunted chamber enacted again.

"Mrs. Grassland! Mrs. Grassland!" he shouted.

"What is the matter? Is the house on fire? Oh, what is it?" called the widow's voice, in frightened tones from within the room.

"Come, Mrs. Grassland! Come! Come! Edith!" called Jack, in an agony of terror.

Then everything seemed to whirl about him. He tottered and sank down into one of the hall chairs, knowing no more until he found Mrs. Grassland fully dressed bending over him, her face full of alarm.

"Mr. Willing! Are you sick? What has happened?" she gasped.

"Oh, Mrs. Grassland, how can I tell you?"

"But you must tell me instantly. I have been into Edith's room—she is not there—she has not been there apparently. Tell me—tell me the worst at once."

Then Jack blurted it all out, speaking rapidly, saying he hardly knew what.

Mrs. Grassland listened, her face turning deathly white, but she never spoke until Jack had uttered the last word.

"Can this be true, Mr. Willing?" she then breathed.

"Every word of it. What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do? To call the police will not be the slightest use. I have tried that twice before. I tell you what the result was; I——"

"Stop! We do not want the police. Why did you not tell me all this before?"

"Mrs. Grassland, how could I? I was amazed when I found what house it was you had taken. Then I did not like to distress you. I was intending to tell you to-morrow, but——"

"But you put it off, and this is the result," interrupted Mrs. Grassland, with more of sorrow than anger in her voice. "Well, Mr. Willing, I don't know that I can blame you. Stay where you are and let me go into that room alone. I will then decide what is best to be done."

"For heaven's sake, Mrs. Grassland, stop and think!"

"I'm thinking of my daughter. Don't try to interfere with me. I shall go."

She caught up the lamp, and gliding through the still open door of the haunted chamber, closed it after her.

In an agony of terror and uncertainty, Jack waited.

No sound came from the mysterious room as the moments slipped by, nor did Mrs. Grassland appear.

The suspense was getting terrible, and Jack could stand it no longer; and yet, for some reason or another, until now he had not been able to make up his mind to follow the woman into the room.

But now, just as he had resolved to do it, the door of the haunted chamber opened, and out walked Mrs. Grassland, looking as white as if she had seen a whole regiment of ghosts.

"It is all right about Edith, Mr. Willing," she said, in cold, hard tones. "Go to bed, and don't disturb yourself. I will see you in the morning and explain."

Whereupon Mrs. Grassland entered her own room, closed and locked the door.

Jack stood staring at her in utter amazement.

"All right about Edith!" he repeated. "How can it be all right? What can she mean?"

Evidently Mrs. Grassland knew more of the secrets of this strange old mansion than she had led him to believe, but as for going to bed, Jack would have as soon thought of going to the moon.

For nearly an hour he wandered about the house and grounds in a state of terrible uncertainty.

At last, worn out, he returned to the parlor, and sank into the big easy chair beside the still open piano.

Here he remained thinking, wondering, dreaming. At first his dreams were waking dreams, but before he knew it they became dreams in earnest.

Jack went fast asleep.

CHAPTER V.

SOME ONE WORSE OFF THAN JACK.

The sun was shining brightly when Jack Willing awoke.

Out on the lawn the robins were hopping, and the sparrows twittering in the trees.

Through the open windows the distant church bells of Harlem came pealing.

It was Sunday morning, and all was bright and peaceful. That horrible night had passed.

Jack was on his feet in an instant, ashamed of himself for having slept.

"I must find Mrs. Grassland instantly," he muttered. "What she knows she's got to tell."

These were his first thoughts as the recollection of the events of the night began to come to him.

His thoughts one half hour later were of a very different kind.

Again he stood by the open piano where those happy moments with Edith had been sent.

He was in a terrible state of perplexity—and why?

Simply because Mrs. Grassland had vanished, the colored man who opened the door the night before had vanished. There was not a trace of a servant even.

Jack had searched high, low, everywhere.

He occupied the house alone.

What was to be done?

Should he call the police and be sent to Sing Sing this time for his pains?

There was no use in calling the police. Nothing but trouble would come of it.

Moreover, when Jack made the search of Mrs. Grassland's chamber, the door of which he found wide open, he discovered that not only were the widow's outer wraps gone, but her bureau drawers were locked, and things generally left in such shape as to indicate that she had gone away deliberately.

It was the same in Edith's room and the room occupied by the servants. There was evidently a side to all this which Jack could not understand.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" he muttered aloud. "I am without money, I have no friends. What shall I do—"

"Do what I tell you, if you are wise," croaked a voice outside the piazza. "You ain't half as bad off as you think you are, Jack Willing, if you only won't be a fool!"

Jack did not wait to be spoken to a second time.

He made one dash out upon the piazza, and there stood the same horrible old hag who had appeared and disappeared on the evening of Harry Halstead's appearance and disappearance.

"He, he, he!" she chuckled. "So you've come back, have you? It didn't pay to insult old Lize, did it? Oh, no! Ho, ho, ho! Weeks and weeks in jail! Ha! Bread and water! He, he! So, so!"

It was these last words which made Jack keep cool.

"I didn't insult you, and you know it," he said.

The old crone seemed to shake with laughter.

"No, no, you did not. It is so. It was the other. You suffered for it, but he suffered, too."

"Where is he? For heaven sake, tell me if you know."

"I know nothing. I have all I can do to attend to my own business—and yours."

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours."

"What can you mean?"

"I mean this, Jack Willing!" hissed the hag, bending forward and leaning heavily upon her stick; "you are surrounded by enemies who would destroy you if they dared, but they do not dare. Listen! Mind what I tell you. Stay in this house. It is yours. Don't let them scare you away; but to-night go under the High Bridge at nine o'clock. Be sure. Do not fail. There is one worse off than you who needs your help. Farewell!"

Thus saying, old Lize glided off among the shrubbery, chuckling as she went.

Jack did not try to stop her.

He felt too badly mixed up to try to do anything. Somehow he seemed nothing but a puppet in the hands of fate.

Thus he felt for the moment.

The next, when his mind had changed, he started to look for the old woman.

He sprang after her through the shrubbery, determined to make her tell more, but it was too late.

Lize had vanished, and search as he would she could not be found.

She had done her work, however.

All that day Jack Willing never left the haunted house on the Harlem.

Nobody came near him, either.

By the time night arrived Jack had come back to the settled determination to stick to the house.

There was plenty to eat in the larder—good beds to sleep in.

To return to his room downtown was only to be pitched into the street on account of his unpaid rent; to report to the police meant to be jailed again.

It was better than going hungry.

At half-past eight Jack closed up the house, locked the

front door, put the key in his pocket, and strolled down the road toward High Bridge.

He had determined to tie to Lize; he was resolved to know if there was any truth in what she had foretold.

It was only a short distance to High Bridge.

As he approached, Jack climbed down the bank and walked along the shore underneath the mighty structure, but could see nothing unusual.

At first he began to think he had come on a fool's errand; then looking at his watch and seeing that it was not yet nine o'clock, he kept on down the shore, returning at the time named and passing by the big pillar again.

It was pitch dark under the bridge now, and Jack felt rather skittish about it, but not a living thing was to be seen.

He was just putting himself down for a fool when he heard a low, moaning cry behind him, followed by a sudden splash.

Jack turned in a hurry, and rushed to the water's edge.

A little further down a person could be seen struggling in the river.

"Hello! Hello, there!" called Jack.

"Help! I'm drowning! I can't swim a stroke!" answered a voice from the river faintly.

It was a woman's voice, Jack thought.

He saw a hand raised as though in mute appeal for help.

"By gracious! It's just as the old witch said," he murmured.

Without waiting for anything, he flung off his coat, kicked off his old shoes, and plunged into the Harlem, swimming straight for the drowning man.

He was down too soon for Jack, however.

He gave one cry as he sank—a cry of despair which rang in Jack's ears for a long time afterward.

But as soon as he rose to the surface Jack was ready for him, and caught him in the proper way, according to the instructions he had received from his swimming teacher in the French school.

Then he saw that it was a mere boy he had hold of.

Certainly the fellow was no older than himself.

Jack swam ashore with his burden the best he could, landing under the High Bridge.

It was not only a boy, but a handsome, intelligent-looking boy. Instead of being dressed according to his looks, however, he was clothed simply in an undershirt and a pair of tattered old trousers, held up by a strap.

No shoes and stockings, no hat.

Jack hauled him up, and stood him on his feet.

"Say, what's the matter with you?" he gasped.

It was some minutes before the boy could speak.

All the time he was coughing and gasping he kept tight hold of Jack, as though he was afraid he would get away.

"Did you jump in yourself, or were you pushed in?" demanded Jack. "Come, brace up, young fellow. Tell us who you are and what the matter is? Don't look so scared. No one will hurt you, I promise you that."

"I—tried to kill—myself!" burst from the boy, in a gasping, disjointed way.

"What did you do that for?"

"I—won't—tell."

"What's your name?"

"Walter."

"Walter what?"

"I won't tell."

"Where are your clothes?"

"I haven't got any, only what you see."

"The deuce! Why, the junkman wouldn't buy those by the pound. Haven't you really got any clothes?"

"No."

"Will you try to kill yourself again if I let go of you?"

"No, no! I'm sorry I did it. The water was cold! Oh, so cold."

"Look here, you young mystery," cried Jack, "are you going to tell me anything about yourself or not?"

"Oh, I can't—I can't do it. Let me stay with you; I'm very wretched. Please let me stay with you."

"I don't know about that."

"Do. I've no friends and no money. I haven't eaten anything in three days. My clothes were stolen from me by tramps. See how I am now, and before—before I got this way—I had everything that money could buy. Please let me stay with you to-night, and I'll go away in the morning if you say so. If you don't I shall jump into the water again."

Jack looked at the handsome, pleading face long and earnestly.

The sudden appearance of this boy seemed all part of the same strange business; still he hesitated.

How could he take a stranger into that dreadful house?

Suddenly as he stood there hesitating a stone dropped at his feet, striking with a force which showed Jack that it must have been flung down from the High Bridge overhead.

"Hst, hst, Jack Willing!" came a voice from high in the air above him. "If you won't help yourself you must help others. Remember what I told you! Take the boy up to the house."

Was it Lize who had spoken?

If so, then she must be on the High Bridge watching them.

It seemed wonderful that her voice could reach down to where they were.

But Jack could see nothing, nor did he hear anything more.

"Come, young fellow," he said, taking the arm of the trembling boy. "Come, Walter! Come home with me."

Home!

Was the haunted house on the Harlem a home for any one?

It was all the home Jack Willing had to offer just then, and he had come all the way from France in hope of a million.

How strange—how very strange it all seemed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FLAMING GHOST.

"Well, young man, how do you feel now?"

"Oh, I'm better—so much better. I feel like a different person altogether."

This was said in Mrs. Grassland's dining room about an hour later.

Walter had just finished a substantial meal of canned salmon with bread and butter, which Jack had put before him.

He pushed back his plate, and declared that he could eat no more.

"Don't feel so much like drowning yourself now as you did?" asked Jack, who had determined to be cheerful himself and cheer this poor boy up the best he could.

"No, no! I am ashamed of it, but then I was in such terrible trouble."

"Won't you tell me about yourself—what your trouble is?"

"No, no! I can't! At least, I can't to-night. Perhaps I will in the morning. I'll think about it to-night."

"Perhaps I can help you."

"I don't believe you can."

"Well, then, if I can't help you, you can help me."

"I'm sure I'll do it if I can."

"Perhaps you'll say you are afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Ghosts!"

"Ghosts!" cried the boy, opening his eyes very wide. "Of course there are no such things. You don't believe in them, do you?"

"I didn't until I came to this house. Now I don't know whether I do or not. Haven't you wondered how I came to be in this great house all alone?"

"Yes; but since I can't answer your questions, I didn't feel that I had any business to be asking questions of you."

"Well, it wouldn't be much use. I feel just about as you do. I don't want to talk about it."

"Then you can appreciate my feelings."

"I do. All the same, I want to know your story."

But Walter changed the subject.

"What about these ghosts?" he asked.

"There's just this much about them: There's a room in this house that's said to be haunted. I'm going to stay there to-night. Don't you want to stay with me and keep me company?"

"I'll stay wherever you do."

"Good! You're the right sort. Don't you want to know my name?"

"Yes."

"Jack."

"All right. Show me the room."

Jack took him into the haunted chamber.

It seemed almost wicked to let this unfortunate boy, in the risk of catching like the rest, but Jack was determined to stay in the room himself, and he felt that he had rather have company than stay there alone.

Still he told Walter something of the mystery.

It made no difference.

The boy seemed scarcely to listen to him.

"I'll stay there if you do," was all he said.

"Then it's a go!" cried Jack. "I'll put a couple of mattresses in there, and we'll keep a light burning. I shall have a big club and you can have another. If the ghosts come we'll give 'em all they want and some to spare."

It was carried out just as arranged.

It was after ten o'clock when the boys retired to the haunted chamber.

Jack brought a table in to put the light on, and laid the mattresses side by side, and with their heads toward the chimney they laid down and began to talk.

Jack got to telling about his school scrapes and adventures in Paris.

He found Walter not only a good listener, but a bright, intelligent talker on every subject but his own affairs.

An hour passed, and nothing had occurred.

Jack, meanwhile, had taken a strong liking to his companion.

"He's a real nice fellow," he said to himself. "He can stay here as long as I do. Perhaps that strange old creature will show up again to-morrow and give me another point. I'm determined to solve this mystery if it takes a year——"

This was after Walter had dropped asleep, which happened shortly after eleven, while Jack was in the middle of one of his school stories.

Until the big clock in the hall downstairs struck twelve Jack remained wide awake, but up to that time nothing had occurred.

"Upon my word, this is dull business," thought Jack, a ghastly chill creeping over him as he realized that the midnight hour had come. "I've a great mind to wake him up. I don't like—heavens! What's this?"

Suddenly the light went out, without even a warning flicker, and Jack found himself in the dark, with such a racket going on all about him as never man heard before.

It was for all the world as though a dozen musical instruments were playing at once, and in anything but harmony.

There were the sounds of drums, fiddles, tambourines, harmonicas and triangles all joined in one general medley.

The sounds seemed to come from all parts of the room at once.

Now they were here—now there—it was impossible to locate them.

Suddenly all was silent.

The effect was tremendous.

Jack leaped up, the cold perspiration standing from every pore.

"Walter! Walter!" he breathed.

There was no answer.

But right at that moment Jack forgot that he had called, for now something occurred which made his very hair stand on end with horror.

Directly at his feet a tall, stately creature seemed to rise, as though coming out of the very floor.

It was a man, although dressed in a long robe of dazzling whiteness and glittering from a thousand flaming points.

It was a man, because it wore a beard.

The beard was long and as white as the flaming robe.

The face and bust Jack had seen before floating above the chair at the head of that mysterious table shown on the previous night.

It was the same face and the same head.

But here now was the entire man.

With one hand outstretched, from each finger end fire seemingly darting, the figure advanced with slow and measured tread directly toward the spot where Jack Willing stood helpless with horror—unable to move so much as an inch.

CHAPTER VII.

WAS THIS A DREAM?

Now, Jack Willing had he been a coward had every chance to show it then.

It took downright courage to stand still and face that tall, ghostly figure with its shining robe and flowing beard.

And yet it was not all courage. No doubt Jack's very feelings of horror helped him to hold his own.

It was coming now, he thought.

It was his turn; he must go the way that all the rest had gone who ventured into the haunted chamber.

Then strange feelings began to come over him, strange thoughts to fit through his head.

He could see the figure standing directly in front of him.

It had ceased to advance, and was moving its hands up and down rapidly before Jack's face.

As the hands moved, Jack could not take his eyes off of them—all fear seemed to leave him, and instead of regarding the fiery figure with terror, he began to think of it as a man, a friend.

Still the old man continued his strange manipulations, never uttering a word.

Suddenly he stopped, and beckoning to Jack to follow, glided across the room to one of the windows overlooking the Harlem, out of which he pointed off upon the river.

Now, the blinds were closed outside this window, and it was necessary to peer through the slats.

Jack did this.

It seemed as though he had to obey the old man whether he wanted to or not.

But the instant he looked, he found himself whirling downward.

Window—room—everything vanished.

He was standing in the most utter darkness with the illuminated figure by his side.

Still he felt no fear, nor was any word spoken. Even when the old man grasped his hand, he did not feel afraid.

The grasp was substantial, the hand feeling anything but ghostly. It seemed to draw him forward, and then Jack saw in front of him, as though at a great distance, a single ray of light.

It was toward this that he was being drawn, and almost before he knew it he was there.

Unseen hands now seemed to seize his head and pull it forward, and then his eyes were filled with the light.

Now all had changed; the darkness vanished, and Jack Willing found himself looking upon a most remarkable scene.

Before him was a room, brilliantly lighted, and furnished as magnificently as any Fifth avenue salon.

It was not so much the room, however, as the people in it which aroused Jack's wonder. He could scarcely believe what he saw—it seemed too preposterous—too unreal.

There were about twenty people in the room—men and women—all in full evening dress.

Among them Jack, to his utter amazement, beheld several familiar faces.

There were Mr. Buttermann, Detective Harry Halstead, Edith Grassland and her mother.

Edith was at the piano playing, although no sound of music reached Jack's ears.

Upon a sofa Mr. Buttermann sat in earnest conversation with Mrs. Grassland.

Harry Halstead was waltzing with a pretty girl in blue, as were several other couples whose faces were strange to Jack.

And while he continued to gaze at this remarkable sight he saw the colored man who had admitted him to the house enter the room bearing a tray loaded with ices.

As he looked at the fellow he perceived what he had not noticed on the previous night.

It was the same darky who had announced the ghostly dinner.

Here was more mystery.

If the darky had been a live darky when he opened the door for Jack, he could not have been the ghost of a darky when seen in the haunted chamber later on.

Filled with wonder, Jack tried to speak, to question his conductor, but found it impossible.

He could not move his eyes from the light; he could not utter a sound.

Was he awake or was he dreaming?

With a mighty effort of will Jack tore himself away from the light, when suddenly everything seemed to spin about him—he felt himself falling, and—presto—change!

He was lying upon the mattress in the haunted chamber with the lamp burning dimly upon the table and Walter in a peaceful sleep beside him.

All had vanished.

Jack was himself again.

Was it but a dream?

CHAPTER VIII.

ABOUT WALTER AND OTHER THINGS.

The moon was streaming in through the slats of the blinds when Jack came to himself, making the room so light that the lamp seemed scarcely necessary.

Jack was on his feet in a minute, rubbing his eyes and trying to collect his wits.

Was it all a dream?

He could not believe it.

It had been too vivid—too real.

But, on the other hand, how had he come back to the room if he had actually left it?

He went all over the chamber, examining everything with the greatest care.

That part of the floor where the illuminated figure had risen at his feet seemed as solid as all the rest.

There was nothing whatever to indicate that he had ever left the room at all.

But after pondering over the matter for a full hour and finding himself no wiser at the end of that time than he was at the beginning, Jack gave it up, and so shall we.

After that he did the most sensible thing he possibly could have done under the circumstances—stretched himself upon the mattress and closed his eyes, never expecting to sleep; and, for all that, sleep came, and Jack knew no more until he was awakened to find broad daylight streaming into the room, with the sparrows twittering like mad among the trees.

With the coming of daylight all belief in the reality of the strange experiences of the night vanished. It had been but a dream—it could have been nothing else.

He shook Walter until he awoke, when both boys went down into the kitchen and had a good wash at the sink.

"Anything happen last night?" asked Walter, rubbing his face vigorously with one of Mrs. Grassland's coarse towels.

"Well, I don't know whether there did or not," replied Jack.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Did anything happen to you, Walter?"

"Not a thing. I was off to sleep before I knew it. Never knew anything after that until you began shaking me to get up."

"Well, it wasn't so with me."

"What do you mean? Something did happen, then?"

"I say just what I said before. I don't know whether there did or not. Maybe it was all a dream, but here goes, Walter. You shall know just what it is."

And Jack related his strange experiences from beginning to end.

"Of course, it must have been a dream."

"I suppose it must."

"Our watching in the haunted room don't seem to have amounted to much."

"Evidently not; but come, let us look up some breakfast. Here it is Monday morning, and I've got to decide what to do. I can't stay idle here."

Walter's face grew long.

"And what am I to do?" he murmured. "Look at me. Look at my clothes. I can't go anywhere the way I am."

"That's a fact. You'd be arrested. How did the tramps come to get your clothes away? If you don't mind telling me that much, I'd like to know."

"Oh, that's no secret. I was walking along the railroad when three of them suddenly sprang upon me. I showed all the fight I had left in me, but it wasn't much, and didn't amount to anything. They had me down in no time, and stripped me to my undershirt. One of them pulled off his own pants and gave them to me; then they all lit out and left me to do the best I could."

"And you had to put the fellow's trousers on?"

"I couldn't do anything else, of course."

"What time was that?"

"About half an hour before you found me."

"Then that was the reason—"

"Hold on, Jack. Don't talk about that. I can't bear to think I was wicked enough to try to take my own life. Being robbed of my clothes was the last straw. I was in a fear-

ful state of mind, and—and—well, never mind. I feel better now. Meeting you has done me lots of good."

"By George, I'm glad I'm able to do good to some one, then. I can't do much for myself, but I've got an idea about clothes for you."

"What is it?"

"We're in this house, and we may as well make the best of it."

"Decidedly."

"Suppose we go to the servants' rooms upstairs? There was a darky here when I first came, but he vanished like all the rest. He may have left some of his clothes behind him, though, and if he has we'll confiscate them, and you shall put them on."

Walter laughed heartily.

"Who'd ever thought I should be glad to get into a darky's clothes?" he exclaimed. "No matter, though I'm here. If we can find them I'll put them on fast enough."

They hurried upstairs, and after a few moments' rummaging about among the chambers, sure enough, they did find just what they wanted. Hanging in a closet was a pair of trousers, with immense black and white checks, with a coat and vest nearly as loud, to match.

There were shirts, too, in the bureau drawer, with collars, cuffs and neckties.

After Walter got through dressing, he presented a most gorgeous appearance; but his wardrobe was now complete, even to a pair of patent leather shoes.

After that they had breakfast, and after breakfast Jack announced his intention of going downtown to look after the things he had left in his room.

"Not that I hope to get them," he added. "I'll do well if the landlady don't have me arrested. I'm going to try for it, though, and see what can be done. Don't you want to go along with me and see the fun?"

"I suppose I may as well," answered Walter. "Of course you don't know me—you don't want to leave me here alone."

"Oh, it ain't that."

"Yes, it is that."

"If you'd only tell——"

"Hold on! I've been thinking the matter over. If you ain't my friend, I haven't one in the world."

"I'll do all I can for you."

"I'm sure of it, and I'm going to tell you something about myself. My name is Walter Ryman. I am the only son of Edwin Ryman, and nephew of Harris Ryman. There! What do you think of that?"

And Walter sat back in his chair just as though he expected to have Jack faint with surprise.

But Jack took it very coolly.

"I never heard those names before," he quietly said.

"Never heard of Harris Ryman?"

"Never. Remember, I'm not long in New York."

"That's so—I forgot. Well, my Uncle Harris is one of the richest men in New York. He is worth millions, and one of the most wicked men in the world. He is a perfect terror on Wall Street. He has crushed many and many a man, and made him a beggar. He is a liar, a thief, a——"

"Hold on—hold on!" cried Jack. "You'll have him a murderer next. Is he really as bad as you make him out?"

"Worse! He'd steal the pennies off his dead grandmother's eyes."

"What's all this to do with your story?"

"Everything. My father was a rich man, too. He told me before his death that he was worth half a million, and had left it all to me. You see, my mother has been dead for years, and I was an only child. We lived in a plain way, father and I, in an old-fashioned house in the Ninth Ward. When father died, that was about three months ago, Uncle Harris stepped in and took charge of everything. He took me to his home to live, and there I've been ever since until three days ago, when we had a blazing row and he kicked me out."

"What for?"

"Because I demanded to know how I stood. He never would tell me anything, never give me a cent of money, and would scarcely speak to me."

"But the rest of the family?"

"There isn't any rest. He's a bachelor; he lives all alone."

"Why didn't you consult a lawyer?"

"I tried to, but I hadn't any money, and he wouldn't listen to me."

"Oh, somebody can be found to listen to you."

"Well, never mind about that. The fact is, I was deter-

mined to find father's will or something to tell me how I stood. I tried and he caught me."

"You mean your uncle?"

"Yes."

"What did he do?"

"Why, he fired me out, and I've been wandering around ever since in a dreadful state of mind. I want your advice, Jack. Father must have left me something—I'm sure of it."

"Well, come on downtown with me, and we'll talk it over," said Jack.

He locked up the house, and crossing the Harlem the boys started downtown.

When Jack got to his room he found everything all right, and, stranger still, he found a letter on his table and addressed to himself.

Upon opening the letter a hundred dollar bill dropped out. This was the strangest of all.

There was not even the scratch of a pen to tell where it had come from—just the hundred dollar bill.

"Hooray! This comes just in time!" cried Jack, shaking the bill at Walter. "By gracious, I'm fixed now for weeks to come."

But the puzzle was who had sent it, and it seemed a riddle not very likely to be solved.

"No matter!" cried Jack. "We'll enjoy ourselves while we can, Walter. I'll pay the landlady, we'll have as good a dinner to-night as can be bought in New York, and wind up at the theater. Meanwhile, we'll see a lawyer about your affairs."

Walter was very grateful.

He became confidential, and told Jack how his uncle had used him, which was really very bad.

Then, one thing leading to another, he confessed that there was doubt about his own position.

Harris Ryman had told him he was only an adopted child and a foundling.

This altered matters.

The lawyer consulted would have nothing to do with the case.

"Bring some proof that you are really Edwin Ryman's son, young man; then I will talk to you," was all he would say.

When the boys came out of the theater that evening it was half-past eleven, the play having been an unusually long one.

Jack was in a happy-go-lucky frame of mind.

The events of the past few weeks had completely unsettled him.

Walter stuck close to him, and evidently had no idea of leaving him, nor did Jack think of telling him to go.

"Let's have some oysters," proposed Jack recklessly.

They went into a well-known Broadway saloon and sat down at a table.

Over their oysters they continued to discuss Walter's affairs.

"And you never had the least intimation from your father that you were an adopted child?" asked Jack.

"Never."

"Not even when he was dying?"

"No; but he died suddenly, as I told you. There was no time to speak then."

"Oh, yes, you told me that—that's so, but I was thinking—hello! What do you want?"

A strange figure had suddenly stopped beside the table, which happened to be near the door.

It was a woman, bent with age, and clothed in rags, her features almost entirely concealed by a curiously shaped bonnet.

"For the love of heaven, gentlemen, please help a poor old

"Get out of here! I've not tasted a bite in a week."

"Get out of here! Get out!" roared the cashier of the saloon. "What do you mean by coming in here and disturbing my customers? Get out!"

But Jack, moved by charity, and feeling rich, slipped a dollar into the old crone's hand.

Instead of the profuse thanks he had expected, the old woman, without taking the slightest notice of the cashier's shout, bent forward and in hurried tones whispered loud enough for both boys to hear:

"The paper is concealed in a secret drawer in the old secretary. Pull the left hand pillar. Go for it, boys! Go for it to-night."

There was no time to say more, for the cashier had just

off his high perch and was already after the supposed beggar, who glided toward the door.

"Get out of here! Don't you ever come in here again!" he roared, catching her by the shoulders and pushing her into the street.

But Jack had recognized the old woman by her voice. It was old Lize.

CHAPTER IX.

DROPPED DEAD.

The effect produced upon the boys by the sudden appearance and disappearance of the mysterious old crone can better be imagined than described.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Jack, "I knew that woman, Walter, and you ought to know her, too."

"I never saw her in my life," protested Walter, looking very much disturbed.

"You never did?"

"Never."

"And yet it was she who told me to go and look for you at nine o'clock underneath the High Bridge."

"What can you mean, Jack? How could any one possibly know that I was going to be underneath High Bridge at nine o'clock last night, when I didn't have the faintest idea of going there until the tramp stole my clothes?"

"Can't help it. She is the old dame I told you about."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive, and I'm sure of another thing, too."

"What's that?"

"I'm sure that you know just what she meant by her mysterious words."

"Jack," whispered Walter earnestly, "you are right. I do."

"Well?"

"The old secretary was my father's. It is now in my uncle's house."

"You don't say so! And do you think the paper proving your identity may be there?"

"It is as likely to be there as anywhere."

"Did you ever hear of this secret drawer?"

"Never."

"By gracious, Walter!" cried Jack recklessly, "I tell you what it is, that old woman is a regular witch. If there is any way of getting into your uncle's house, I'd advise you to try it. I'll bet you anything you like her words come true."

"There is no trouble about getting in," said Walter slowly.

"I've got a latch key in my pocket at the present moment. Uncle seldom comes home before one o'clock, and it ain't twelve yet. There's nothing at all to prevent me from slipping in and going for the secret drawer."

"Then I'd do it. Where does your uncle live?"

"Just a little way from here on Fifth avenue between 27th and 28th."

"Let's hurry up and finish the oysters and we'll take a turn round there and see how the land lies," said Jack.

Jack spoke just as he felt. He was up to anything that night.

Moreover, he began to feel great confidence in old Lize and her sayings.

Before many minutes had passed the boys found themselves walking along Fifth avenue.

Presently Walter pointed to a large brown stone mansion on their left, and announced that as his uncle's house.

"And that old fellow lives there?" exclaimed Jack.

"That's the house."

"Confounded old thief! If I were you I wouldn't think twice about going for him."

"Will you go with me?" asked Walter, turning on him suddenly.

This was altogether a different part of speech. Jack had not thought of that.

"Well, it ain't my business."

"That's true. We can do it in a minute, though. There's no light in uncle's room, and the servants are all abed long ago. I've got the latch key. All we've got to do is to slip in, go for the secret door, and slip out again."

It sounded very easy.

Remember, Jack knew very little of New York, and, after all, was nothing but a schoolboy, in spite of the fact that at his age boys in New York are generally far beyond their school days.

"Are you sure it can be done just as you say?" he questioned.

"Of course I am."

"There's no risk?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, then, I'll go. We'll stick together. You shall get the paper, and we'll steer straight for my room."

It was a strange experience for Jack, and when he got to the front door of the Ryman mansion he began to think that he was engaged in a sort of business that looked very much like burglary.

He looked warily up and down the street to see if he could see a policeman.

He would sooner have encountered all the ghosts of the Haunted House on the Harlem than one officer of the law just then.

But there was none in sight, and by this time Walter had the door open.

"Come! Let's go in!" he breathed. "Just a minute, and the job is done."

"I'll stay here."

"No. Come on! Come on!"

Thus urged, Jack followed into the hall, where a single gas jet faintly burned.

Walter pushed the door shut, but did not latch it, and led the way through to the library.

"Got a match?" he whispered.

Jack had a match, and handed it over. His heart seemed to fly into his mouth as the gas flared up, revealing a handsomely furnished library.

He took courage, however, when he saw that they were alone.

"There's the secretary," whispered Walter, pointing to a quaint old piece of mahogany in one corner. "That was father's. It always stood——"

"Go for it! Go for it! Don't stop to talk," breathed Jack, whose ears were strained to catch every sound.

"All right! Don't you be afraid."

"Is it locked?"

"No. The key was lost before I was born."

"Open it, then."

"Not now, you young thief!" cried a voice behind them. "You will break into my house at midnight, will you? Ha! I have you where I want you now, you beggar's brat!"

Now, Jack was not aware that he was a beggar's brat, but the tall man, who suddenly glided from behind the portiere which separated the library from the front parlor, clapped a heavy hand on his shoulder, and swung him around.

Jack tore himself free, and leaped for the door.

He did not lay a finger upon the man, or do anything to cause so startling an occurrence as immediately followed.

"Heavens! It's Uncle Harris!" burst from Walter at the same instant, when suddenly the man gave a sharp cry, pressed his hand to his head, and fell heavily to the floor.

"Great Scott! He's got one of his fits!" breathed Walter. "Now's our time. I'll have the paper in two shakes."

He sprang to the secretary and opened it, but Jack, more from curiosity than sympathy, bent down over the fallen millionaire.

Was it a fit?

If so, then it was a very strange one.

The man lay perfectly motionless—did not seem to be breathing.

Jack placed his hand upon his heart, for the truth had dawned upon him.

"Great heavens!" he whispered, "this is no fit. The man is dead."

CHAPTER X.

BLACKMAIL.

"He's dead, Walter—he is certainly dead."

"Great Scott! It certainly looks like it. We didn't touch him, Jack."

"Never laid a finger on him. He shoved me about, but I never touched him at all."

"Heavens! What shall we do?"

"You said something about fits. Was your uncle subject to fits, Walter?"

"Yes, he was."

"Like this?"

"No, no! Foamed at the mouth, turned and twisted."

"That's it—epileptic fits. It may be a new kind. We ought to have a doctor."

"Dear me—dear me!" murmured Walter. "If any one catches us here, we shall be accused of murdering him."

This was a highly cheerful suggestion. Worse still, Jack saw at a glance that it was true.

Then it began to dawn upon him that he was getting himself badly snarled up with another man's troubles.

But could he desert Walter then?

Hardly. Some might have done so, but it wasn't Jack's style.

"Hurry up and get the papers," he whispered, "and then we'll wake up the servants somehow."

"Oh, I dassent do that! They know I was kicked out."

"Get the papers! Get the papers! Great Scott man we'll both be arrested for murder if we keep on fooling like this."

Walter pulled open the old secretary.

There were books and papers in the various pigeon holes. Between the pigeon holes on the right hand and those on the left was a little door, and on either side of this door was a carved pillar..

Evidently old Lize knew what she was talking about.

Walter seized the particular pillar of which she had spoken, and out it came with a drawer behind it.

Out of this draw he took a thin packet of papers, and held them up to the light.

"Great heavens! The old hag was right!" whispered Walter. "See here!"

He held up the packet so that Jack could see written on the outside:

"Papers relating to my boy, Walter E. Ryman."

"You've got 'em. Now, then, we must light out," breathed Jack.

Before Walter could reply, the portiere was thrown aside, and a man walked into the room.

"Too late!" gasped Jack, involuntarily. "We're in for it now!"

It was a foolish thing to say, but it is doubtful if the result would have been different even if he had not spoken.

The man was short, stout and clean shaven. His clothes looked as though they were pasted upon him, so snugly did they fit—especially the trousers—a shiny hat tilted rakishly to the left, and a long cigar in the right-hand corner of his mouth completed the picture. That they had a tough customer to deal with Jack saw at a glance.

"Say, looker here, you two," said the man, in low, menacing tones. "If the old snoozer is dead there's jist this much about it. I've gotter be paid to keep dark—see?"

Jack looked at the speaker in dismay. Walter sank helplessly into a chair.

"I'm a detective, I am," continued the man, throwing back his coat impressively and exhibiting a shield as big as a saucer. "My name is O'Dowd, an' I want you to understand I've got ther pull. I kin railroad you two fellers or I kin keep it dark—see?"

"We hadn't anything to do with Mr. Ryman's death," gasped Walter.

"Never laid a hand on him. It was he that attacked us!" protested Jack.

"That's all right. Him an' me was in the parlor talkin' in the dark. We heard the hull business. You two are thieves, if nothing else—see?"

"I should say you'd better see if he's dead, and call a doctor if he isn't," said Jack sullenly. "I've nothing at all to do with this business."

"Oh, yes, you have! He's dead fast enough. Besides, I don't care nothing at all about him. He sent for me to talk over the best way of finding this here young snoozer, an' we couldn't agree on terms nohow. I was jest a-goin' when this happened, for I didn't think there was no fat into the case, but now I find there's a hull pot full for a smart feller like me. If Harris Ryman is dead, there ain't nobody in New York that'll cry about it. Howsoever, we've got to have a doctor. First, though, I'll take a look myself."

He bent over the body, and the way he handled himself showed that he knew just what he was about.

"He's as dead as a door-nail," he announced. "Heart disease most likely. But if you two squint crosswise at me I'll put you blagged him. Now, then, before I call in out-iders, under here, you——"

"Do you mean me?" gasped Jack.

"No; t'other feller."

"What do you want?" faltered Walter, who was evidently very much frightened.

"I want to tell you what to do," said the detective coolly. "With Harris Ryman dead, and that there paper in your possession, you're worth millions. Now, then, you're going to put matters in my hands—you're going to stay right here in this house and invite me to stop along with you. You ain't going to talk to nobody unless I tell you to talk, and when it's all straightened out you're going to give me one hundred thousand dollars for helping you out of such a scrape."

"Is there anything else you want?" asked Jack sarcastically.

"No. I think that will do. What's yer name?"

"Jack Willing."

"Well, then, Jack Willing, you'll stay right here while I shake up the servants and send for a doctor. Is it all agreed?"

Jack said nothing.

"Speak up, young Ryman. How is it?" demanded O'Dowd.

"I suppose you'll do as you like," muttered Walter. "I can only tell the truth."

"Kerect! It's a go!" cried O'Dowd, and pushing his hat on the back of his head he walked out of the room.

"What's to be done?" whispered Walter. "Oh, Jack, this is a terrible thing."

"Keep cool, Walter. My advice to you is to stay and face the music."

"Will you stay with me?"

"Don't ask me to do that."

"But I've got no one else to turn to. Don't desert me, Jack."

But it was too late even then to talk of going for at the same moment Detective O'Dowd came bouncing in again with the butler and the coachman at his heels.

"He's fallen in a fit," he was saying as they entered. "Go for a doctor, one of you. Is that your wish, Mr. Ryman? You are master here."

"Go, Peter," said Walter. "If uncle's life is to be saved no time must be lost."

The opportunity to protest had come, and was lost.

Jack saw plainly enough that both he and Walter were in the clutches of the unscrupulous O'Dowd.

In less than fifteen minutes the library was full of people.

The doctor, the police, the servants and the neighbors were all on hand.

To all O'Dowd told one story.

Mr. Ryman's nephew, who had been missing, had returned suddenly. The shock was too great for the millionaire, and he had fallen dead.

Heart disease, the doctor pronounced it, and he further declared that death had been instantaneous.

Meanwhile, the greatest confusion prevailed.

Everybody was talking to everybody else, and no one seemed to know what to do.

"Anyhow, you've got the paper, Walter!" whispered Jack, as they stood together in one corner of the parlor. "Have you looked at it yet? Do you know what it amounts to?"

"No; upon my word, I've been so shaken up I——" Great heavens, Jack, I haven't got it! The paper's gone!"

Walter stood with his hand in his breast pocket, his face the picture of dismay.

"Gone!" echoed Jack.

"Gone, as true as you live!"

"But where could it have gone to? I saw you put it in that pocket with my own eyes."

Perhaps Jack would not have thought it quite so strange had he known that Mr. O'Dowd had been an expert pick-pocket in Boston before he became a detective in New York.

CHAPTER XI.

JACK AND WALTER KICK OUT OF THE TRACES.

"By gracious, Jack, look at him! There he is, drunk again! Upon my word, Jack, he acts just as though he owned the whole house."

It was just one week after the sudden death of Harris Ryman.

Jack and Walter had been out for a stroll, and now coming in about ten o'clock, caught sight of Detective O'Dowd snooz-

ing on the satin-covered sofa in the parlor, with a whisky bottle and a box of cigars on the table by his side.

"Looks as though he owned the whole house, and us, too, Walt. I tell you, we were the biggest kind of fools to listen to him that night."

"Guess I know it, now that it is too late," replied Walter dejectedly. "Did you see that fellow at our heels again to-night? I tell you, we have never taken a step or made a move that has not been watched."

Jack opened the hall door, and glanced across the street.

"There he is, Wait! See over there on the corner."

"I see him—shut the door. By thunder, if I could only get that paper I'd make him sick!"

"That fellow across the street?"

"No—O'Dowd, of course."

"Blame him!"

"He shook it at me only yesterday," continued Walter bitterly. "He don't deny taking it out of my pocket when all those people came crowding into the room—the thief!"

"Did he give you any idea what it says, Walt?"

"None at all. He says he can either make or break me."

What do you suppose he asks now, Jack?"

"Give it up. It was \$250,000 yesterday."

"He wants a cool half million to-day."

"There is nothing small about him! It'll be a million next."

"Hush! He's waking up! Let's skip upstairs to the room," whispered Walter, who was peering through the crack of the parlor door.

But before they had time to get away Detective O'Dowd came tumbling out of the parlor.

"Here! Stop!" he cried in a maudlin way. "I've got a bone to pick with you two. You've been talking to a lawyer. You try that again and I'll make you sick. There's \$10,000,000 a-comin' here, an' I'll be blamed if you're going to cheat me out of my share."

This was interesting, but it was only a sample of what Jack and Walter had been going through all the week.

From that fatal night until now Detective O'Dowd had acted precisely as though he owned the Ryman mansion and everything there was in it.

He had taken possession of the dead millionaire's chamber directly after the funeral.

When it turned out that Mr. Ryman, being a lawyer himself, employed no regular attorney, then, in Walter's name, O'Dowd engaged a notorious Tombs shyster to look after affairs.

There were no relatives but Walter.

The detective and his confederate took possession of Harris Ryman's papers, and refused to tell him the contents of the will.

When Walter protested, O'Dowd threatened to make a charge of murder against him, and another against Jack.

Of course if these boys had been anything but boys they would never have submitted to any such outrageous blackmail.

But they were boys, and so far they had submitted, for they were without money, experience or friends.

They had slipped into this snare without any trouble, but it was quite another matter to get out again.

But Jack, by this time, had become as much attached to Walter as if he had known him all his life.

Nothing would have induced him to desert Walter now.

"What's the matter with you?" cried Jack, pushing back O'Dowd, who tried to put his hand upon his shoulder. "Do you think we are nothing but a couple of slaves?"

"Blamed if I don't! That's just what you are."

"Oh, you're too drunk to know what you're talking about!"

"Jack! Jack! for heaven's sake, be careful!" cried Walter beseechingly.

But it was too late. The mischief was already done.

"Drunk! Drunk! Who says I'm drunk?" roared O'Dowd.

"I say so!"

"You're a liar! I can hang you, young feller, and I'll do it if you don't look out. What do you want to take him to a lawyer for? I'm law in this house——"

Now, it might have been all right even yet, if O'Dowd had only had sense enough to keep his hands off of Jack.

But O'Dowd was drunk and ugly. He thought himself master of the situation, and on the strength of that he very foolishly slapped Jack across the face.

That settled it.

It was like touching a lighted match to dynamite.

All fear vanished in an instant.

Biff! Whack! Bang!

Jack had not studied the manly art in the French academy for nothing.

O'Dowd got one under the jaw and another in the eye before he knew where it came from.

The next moment he was sprawling on the floor with Jack on top of him.

"Go for his pockets, Walt! Go for his pockets, while I hold him down!" cried Jack. "We may as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb."

Walter was not backward about coming forward, as the saying goes.

While Jack held the struggling detective pinned to the floor, he knelt down and thrust his hand hastily in one pocket after another.

"I've got it!" he cried. "By George, here it is! The very package he stole from me!"

"Help! Murder! Help!" roared O'Dowd.

"Skip, Walt! Skip!" cried Jack.

Walter flung the front door open, and dashed out. Jack, with a sudden bound, let go his hold on O'Dowd and darted after him.

"Stop them! Stop them!" roared the detective's voice behind them, as they went flying down the stoop.

The cry might have been heard a block away.

It was heard by the man whom they boys spotted.

Where he had been hiding they never knew, but he was right on hand.

He seemed to suddenly rise up before them and plant himself directly in their path.

"Stop! Stop, or I'll blow your brains out!" he shouted. "You don't get away from me!"

CHAPTER XII.

OVER THE WALL.

Jack Willing had no more notion of being shot by this unknown foe than he had of being downed by Detective O'Dowd.

The tables were turned. O'Dowd's teeth were drawn. Walter, with the paper and Walter without were two very different persons.

Without showing the slightest hesitation, Jack flung himself upon the spy.

Bang!

Instantly a shot rang out upon the night.

Thud!

Down dropped the spy upon the sidewalk, tipped over by a blow under the chin, and Jack, with the smoking revolver in his hand, wheeled around into Twenty-ninth street, followed by Walter, and dashed on at the top of his speed.

"By gracious, you did that slick," panted Walter. "You had the revolver out of his hand before he knew where he was."

"Just what I meant to do, my dear fellow. Don't you stop! Don't slack up a bit."

"I can't talk running, Jack. Great Scott! We're in for it now! If O'Dowd makes a charge against us we'll both be hung."

"Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it. Your uncle left a big fortune, and there must be some honest lawyer in New York willing to help you, even if the man who talked with you to-day did prove to be a snide."

"You'll stand by me, Jack?"

"Of course I will. I can't do anything to better my own affairs. I'll take old Lize's advice and help all I can in yours."

"Where are we going?"

"Blest if I know. Suppose we go back to the haunted house?"

"The very thing I was going to propose. Hark! There they come."

The sound of rapid footsteps now suddenly became audible behind them.

Looking back, Jack saw both O'Dowd and his friend coming down the street under full sail.

Both were good runners, too. They did not shout. Evidently they felt very sure of running the boys down.

Just at that moment our young friends gained Broadway. "Stop! we can't run here!" panted Jack. "Make for a car."

A "green line" car was just passing, and the boys boarded it.

O'Dowd's eye was upon them before they could get inside the car.

Now, like many other men, Detective O'Dowd could be drunk one moment and sober the next.

"He's right on top of us!" gasped Walter.

"Never mind! We've got the start. Don't you say a word."

But the mischief had been done already, for the conductor overheard Walter's incautious remark, and sharply rang the bell.

"Get off my car, you two!" he said gruffly. "Get right off!"

"What's that for?" demanded Walter.

"Slide off, Walt! Don't stop to talk!" cried Jack.

They dropped into the street, and the car moved on.

O'Dowd and his companion were within a block of them now, and, horrible to relate, a policeman had joined them. Matters were in a decidedly bad way.

Now, the car had taken them as far as Thirtieth street, and Jack had Walter around the corner in no time, and then they went stumbling right upon a piece of good luck in the shape of an empty hack headed toward Sixth avenue.

The driver had stopped to adjust the pole strap, and Jack, who took in the situation at a glance, went for him with a rush.

"Say, we're being chased! I'll give you ten dollars to take us uptown, whether we are caught or not."

The driver shot one look at the panting boys.

"Cash down, and it's a go!" he said abruptly.

Jack had his money ready, and slipped it into the fellow's hand.

"Pile in!" cried the driver.

Never did two boys get into a hack any quicker.

"Take Eighth avenue, and go on till we're stopped!" called Jack, as he slammed the door.

The hack was off at full speed in an instant, the boys sinking down on the cushions with a sigh of relief.

"Are we safe?" panted Walter.

"Don't know. Hark! Didn't you hear O'Dowd shouting?"

But if Jack had heard anything of the sort, they did not hear it again, and the hack rolled on.

In a few minutes they were on Eighth avenue, making splendid speed uptown.

"By George, that was done slick!" cried Walter. "I don't believe he saw us at all."

"Don't be too sure," replied Jack.

"I'm being followed, gents!" called down the driver at that moment, "and by a better team than me own. What shall I do?"

"Go on as fast as you can. If they gain on you slack up a little, let us out, and then keep right on till you're overhauled."

Faster than ever went the hack, until they had crossed Fifty-ninth street, and were running alongside the park wall.

There was nothing but vacant lots here at the time of which we write.

Eighth avenue above Fifty-ninth street was simply an unpaved country road.

"They're close on top of me, boss!" called the driver again.

"I'm going to slack up now!"

He slackened up more effectually than he had intended, for by some blunder the forward wheel caught the car track, which stood a good foot above the road level.

The next the boys knew over went the hack on the car track, they falling on top of each other amid a crash of glass.

The wheel had been taken off at the axle as smoothly as though cut with a knife.

"Great Scott! We are done for now!" groaned Jack, who was underneath. "Get off of me, Walt! Break the other window! Get out somehow, only get out!"

Walter managed to drive his fist through the window and crawl out.

In a few seconds Jack followed, in spite of the fact that the frightened horses were dragging the vehicle.

"Hold on, there! Hold on! Don't you leave! I must be paid for this!" roared the driver, who was at the horses' heads.

"Hold those boys! They're wanted for murder!" the voice of O'Dowd was heard shouting, and another hack, drawn by two panting horses, came dashing up alongside before the boys could make a move.

"Fly, Walt! Over the park wall!" cried Jack; but they were on the wrong side of the ruined vehicle, and had to run around.

They gained the wall ahead of O'Dowd, however, but he was right after them, with the policeman and the other detective at his heels.

"I can't climb up there!" gasped Walter.

Jack seized him by the legs and lifted him up.

"Catch the wall and slide over!" he cried.

"Shoot 'em if they won't stop!" yelled O'Dowd, as Jack leaped up, caught the wall and vaulted over.

Crack!

Crack!

Two shots rang out upon the night, but no damage was done.

Then as Jack touched the ground a new danger suddenly came upon him, for a man arose up out of the shadows of the wall and seized him by the throat.

"Hold on, young feller! Hold on!" he hissed. "Not quite so fast."

Jack and Walter succeeded in getting safely away and returned to the haunted house. Jack, still having the key, they entered the house. They then examined the papers, and found Elwin Ryman's will bequeathing to Walter all of his vast wealth.

Suddenly footsteps were heard outside and old Lize's voice rang out: "Fly to the haunted room and put the lights!" They did so.

Soon they heard O'Dowd's voice ring out and then commenced a fierce banging on the door.

After waiting a while, they descended the secret stairs to their bottom.

They heard music. Pushing open the door to the haunted room they again saw the same performance going on as before and the same people. Walter turned his head in another direction from that in which they were looking, and when he turned back again Jack had disappeared, and in the doorway of the haunted room stood a tall man of great age with snow-white hair.

"Who are you?" he demanded of Walter.

CHAPTER XIII.

STRANGE ADVENTURES UNDERGROUND.

Walter stared at the ghost.

We say ghost, for the reason that the tall, white-headed figure which had so suddenly appeared before the boy filled the description of the ghost given by Jack in every particular.

Walter could not doubt for an instant that it was the same man.

Walter was frightened, yet triumphant.

He had never believed in the ghost, and had said so.

But where was Jack? Had this dreadful man made away with the poor fellow?

"By gracious, I'd better be careful," he thought. "I must speak to him fair."

But when he tried to speak he found himself unable to say a word.

Why?

That Walter could not tell.

When he opened his mouth with the intention of speaking not a sound could he utter. All he could do was to gaze at those terrible eyes.

A curious smile passed over the face of the old man.

"Well, boy, why don't you speak?" he said in a deep bass voice.

Again Walter opened his mouth, gasping like a fish, but there was no sound.

"Speak!"

He heard the command as though coming from a distance—his senses seemed to be slipping away from him. Then suddenly all this changed, and Walter found himself with all his senses restored.

A strange calmness seemed to come over him. It seemed, also, as though he had known the old man all his life.

"Who are you?" demanded the old man in a milder tone.

"My name is Walter Ryman."

"Walter Ryman! Humph! I do not know you. Why are you here?"

"I came here with Jack Willing!"

To save himself Walter could not help answering as he did.

"Jack Willing! That is the young man who was here a moment ago."

"Yes."

"Why did you come here?"

"We found the secret door."

"Stop! You do not tell the truth. You could not have found the secret door unaided. Who told you where it was?"

"An old woman named Lize showed us one door. We found the other ourselves."

"Lize! Ah! Ten thousand maledictions on that old hag! Where is she now?"

"I don't know."

"Do you know any reason why I should not kill you both for meddling with what does not concern you? Boy, follow me!"

To this Walter made no answer—he could make none. Again all power of speech seemed to have been taken from him.

The old man started along the corridor toward its end, Walter followed.

Meanwhile, the music had started up again, and he could hear the sound of many voices proceeding from the mysterious room.

But this was only for a moment. Reaching the end of the corridor Walter perceived an opening in the wall which he had not seen before.

The old man stood aside and pointed through.

"Enter!" he said commandingly.

As meekly as a child, Walter obeyed.

Instantly a great upright stone glided across the opening behind him.

All was dark now save for a solitary glimmer which shone at the bottom of a flight of steps directly in front of him.

The old man had disappeared.

"Great heavens! What does all this mean?" gasped Walter, leaning against the wall and staring around.

He felt as though a great weight had suddenly been removed from his brain. Instead of that sense of calmness he now found himself seized with a horrible fear.

Should he descend the steps?

For a moment he hesitated, the next and he saw some one coming up. It was a man; Walter could not distinguish his features—only his figure. He drew back against the wall in an agony of fear, resolved to defend himself to the last.

On came the figure, each step he ascended increasing the boy's terror, until at last he lost all self-control.

"Keep back!" he shouted. "Keep back! Don't you lay a hand on me!"

"Great Scott! That you, Walt?" suddenly called a welcome voice.

It was Jack.

Walter leaned back against the wall, almost too faint to speak.

"Jack! Jack! Oh, Jack!" he gasped, and in a moment Jack was at his side.

"There! There, old fellow! Brace up! 'Tain't so bad but we may come out all right. Did he get hold of you, too?"

"Oh, Jack! Jack!"

"Hush! Don't shake so! There's nothing to be afraid of for a few minutes, anyhow. He is not here."

"That frightful, old man?"

"Of course. Did he catch you, too, Walt?"

"Jack, I don't know what he did to me."

"Same here, Walt. He got his eyes on me, and they seemed to suck me right through the wall, as it were. Did he say anything to you?"

"Did he—well, I should say he did! What did he say to you, Jack?"

"Not a word."

"What?"

"It's just as I tell you. When you started to look through the peep-hole, I turned around, and there he was. The next thing I knew I was in here."

Walter groaned.

"Oh, Jack! We've got ourselves into terrible trouble, I am afraid."

"There! There! Don't take it so hard. We're in for it, and must do the best we can. What did he say to you, Walt?"

Walter related his experience.

Somewhat Jack's presence seemed to give him courage. He

was quite himself by the time he had related all there was to tell.

"Blest if it ain't the strangest thing I ever saw," muttered Jack. "Why, I was just like putty when that old fellow's eyes were upon me, and with you, Walt, it seems to have been just the same."

"Worse."

"Not a bit worse. My case is the worst if anything, for he didn't speak to me at all, and yet I walked straight in here. He must be a mesmerist, Walt."

"Blest if I don't think he is a magician. Anyhow, he's no ghost."

"That's sure. But, say, Walt! Now we're here let's make the most of it. There's a big mystery hanging over this house, and the old fellow is evidently at the bottom of it. Let's see what we can find out?"

"You've been downstairs, Jack. What did you find?"

"Nothing. I only went a little way. Do you suppose I was going to leave you without an effort to get back? Not much."

"I suppose there is no use trying——"

"To get back through this?" cried Jack, striking his fist against the stone. "Not a bit of it. I tried that. Come on! Let's go downstairs and see what we can find. We might discover some way out of this strange place."

But they did not.

Descending the stairs, they found themselves standing at the entrance to another corridor, which seemed to run directly beneath the one they had just left.

The walls and floor were of stone, but the ceiling was of wood. At the foot of the stairs a small hanging lamp hung suspended from a beam, shedding a fitful light upon the strange scene.

In a few moments the boys were back at the foot of the stairs again, no wiser than when they had started out. They had penetrated to the end of the corridor without discovering a break of any sort in the wall.

"This is a great note," muttered Jack. "Of course he don't intend to leave us here forever. What's to be done, Walt?"

"Don't ask me, Jack. I can't tell you."

Jack drew a long breath. "I tell you what it is, Walt, you and I have disappeared like all the rest. That's the long and short of it, now you may depend."

"I'm blest if it don't look so."

"It is so. I—— Hark! What's that?"

"Some one coming along the corridor."

"Sure! Hush! Keep cool, now! Whatever happens we don't want to show ourselves afraid."

But it was easier said than done.

The boys backed against the wall under the hanging lamp, and waited.

"Heavens and earth! What kind of a thing 'is that?" gasped Walter, as the light fell upon the approaching figure.

"Hush! It's only a mask!" breathed Jack. "No such baby business as that is going to frighten me."

Certainly it was a mask—it could have been nothing else—and yet, seen in that dim light, under such circumstances, the boys could scarcely have been blamed for being a bit rattled.

From the shoulders down the approaching figure was that of a man. Pulled over his head was the strangest mask imaginable. It was the head of an enormous bird.

"You want to follow me, young gentlemen," said the figure in a deep, sepulchral voice.

No sooner had the figure spoken, than it turned and retreated along the corridor, leaving Jack and Walter to follow or not, as they pleased.

"Are you going?" asked Walter in a whisper.

"You bet! What else can we do? I mean to see this thing through to the end."

Then Jack started, and Walter followed.

The figure, meanwhile, had never looked back to see whether they were coming, nor did it speak again, but before the boys had gone three feet some one else spoke.

"Be brave, boys! Do what you are told to do, but eat nothing—drink nothing!"

"Heavens! Who spoke?" gasped Walter, suddenly stopping.

They looked behind them, but could see no one.

The voice, however, had, seemingly, come from above.

It was the voice of the woman, Lize!

CHAPTER XIV.

IMPRISONED WITH A CORPSE.

"Enter, young gentlemen. Let us live while we live, and be happy while we may. Eat, drink, and be merry. Walk in."

It was the mask who spoke now.

He bowed his bird's head low before them, for he had opened a door at the end of a corridor, and a flood of light streamed forth.

Now, in a twinkling, everything had changed.

Vanished were the surroundings of the previous moment. The boys saw before them a broad staircase covered with a rich carpet, with polished rails and a cluster of colored globes hanging from the ceiling above, within each of which a bright light burned, the combination of colors producing a most peculiar effect.

At the foot of the stairs stood the darky who had admitted Jack to the house on the evening of his call upon Mrs. Grassland and Edith.

He also bowed, and without speaking motioned upward, with just the faintest suspicion of a smile upon his dusky face.

"Are we to go upstairs?" asked Jack, determined under all circumstances to keep perfectly cool.

There was no answer.

The darky made another bow, and waved his hand again.

"Why don't you speak?" demanded Jack.

Still there was no answer.

As solemn as an owl, the darky stood there motioning up the stairs.

"Shall we go up, Walt?" whispered Jack.

"I suppose we might as well. We can't stay here. See, that masked fellow has gone."

"By George, so he has! But where? He shut the door behind him."

"Doors seem to make no difference here."

"That's a fact. Lead on, cully! We'll follow."

But without moving a muscle of his face, the man simply repeated his bow and wave of the hand.

Jack burst out laughing.

There was something so ridiculously theatrical about all this that he could not help it, for Jack was by nature one of those happy fellows who always saw the comical side of everything.

"Come on, Walt!" he exclaimed. "We may as well be hung for an old sheep as a lamb. We'll see this thing out."

Up they went, finding themselves standing before a door when they reached the head of the stairs.

Here another darky was stationed. He was in full dress like his companion below, and approached the boys with a respectful bow.

"How are you?" said Jack, nodding. "Are you dumb, too?"

It would seem that he was, for there was no answer.

Throwing open the door, the darky motioned to the boys to enter.

Before them now lay the room which they had seen through the peep-hole.

There was Edith at the piano; there was the same merry dancers; there was Mrs. Grassland, Mr. Butterman, and the rest.

With the same assurance that he had resolved to maintain, Jack Willing walked boldly into the brilliantly lighted salon, when in a twinkling all vanished, and he found himself standing at the foot of the stone steps, beneath the hanging lamp, just where he had been when the man with the bird's-head mask first appeared.

Jack gave a quick gasp and stared around.

There was Walter beside him, rubbing his eyes and staring, too.

"Great Caesar's ghost!" he ejaculated. "What's the matter, Jack? Where is it? Where have they all gone to? What struck us now?"

But Jack found himself so strangely affected that he could scarcely speak.

"Walter, this is a most wonderful thing."

"It beats me, Jack."

"It knocks me silly. Did I go into that room, or didn't I?"

"Well, I don't know what you did, but I declare I did, Jack."

"And in spite of all that, it's very evident that neither of us did. It beats me! I give it up!"

"Hush!" breathed Jack. "Some one is coming again! By thunder, if it's that masked fellow, I'll soon know whether he's real or not."

But it was not the mask this time.

Instead, the boys saw the old man approaching along the corridor.

He came slowly, with bowed head, never raising his eyes until he was close upon them.

The boys were too much overawed to speak.

"Young men, follow me!" he said solemnly, when within about three feet of Jack and Walter, at the same time pressing his hand against the wall and flinging open a door which Jack could see was only wood, although painted to look like stone.

It was no use to attempt to disobey, for his eyes were upon them—those terrible eyes whose slightest glance seemed to possess the power of making all obey the will of the strange being.

The boys followed him through the door, along a passage running at right angles with the one they had left, until at length they were ushered into a room furnished in Oriental style, with heavy hangings all about the walls, cushions, expensive rugs and the skins of animals being thrown about the floor, a superb hanging lamp of colored glass shedding a soft, mellow light upon all.

The instant the boys passed the door the hangings fell behind them. Now the walls looked precisely the same all around the room, with no trace of either door or window to be seen.

"Sit down," said the man, flinging himself upon a large bear-skin rug. "Sit down; I want to talk with you."

"Where shall we sit?" asked Jack.

"Anywhere. Take those cushions."

He pointed toward two handsome cushions nearly opposite to the place he had himself chosen. Upon these the boys seated themselves, wondering what was coming next.

For a moment the old man gazed at them fixedly; then reaching behind him, he produced a curious-looking pipe, which he proceeded to light, and began puffing out great wreaths of smoke.

"Which of you is Jack Willing?" he asked suddenly.

"That's my name," replied Jack.

"You are mistaken. It is not your name."

"It's the only name I know anything about."

"You are mistaken. I tell you, you are no more Jack Willing than this young man is Walter Ryman. You are brothers; your name is—oh, heavens! Ah, it has come at last! Death! Death! This is death!"

He clapped his hand upon his heart, these exclamations coming almost with a shriek. He tried to rise, but fell back upon the bear-skin rug. The pipe dropped from his hand, his head fell forward upon his breast. Swaying for a moment, he dropped backward, and all was still.

"Great heavens, Jack! The man is dying!" breathed Walter.

So suddenly had it all come upon them that the boys never made a move, but now Jack sprang up and ran to his side.

"What's the matter? Are you sick? Speak!" he shouted.

There was no answer.

The closing eyes and ghostly whiteness which now came over the face told the tale.

Dying the man certainly was. Dead he surely would be in a moment unless something could be done to help him.

Jack looked around for water, but could see none.

"What can we do, Walt?" he cried.

"Nothing."

"But we must!"

"It's no use. He is dead already. It's heart disease. Father went just the same way. I tell you, Jack, he's dead."

Nor could there be much doubt about it, for when Jack seized the old man's hand he found that the clenched fingers had already begun to stiffen. Moreover, the expression on his face was unmistakably that of death.

"We want to get out of here," cried Jack.

"We must find somebody. Great Scott, Walt! This gets worse and worse!"

"Did you hear what he said, Jack—that we were brothers?"

"You bet I did!"

"Do you believe it?"

"Walt, I don't know. We certainly look alike, and since I know absolutely nothing about myself, it might be true. But let's find the door, old fellow. This is too much for me. I—by gracious! Where is the door?"

Jack was busy pulling the heavy hangings away from the wall while speaking, but nothing but solid stone was visible. They tried it here, there, everywhere—all around the room, but it was useless.

They could not find the door.

Everywhere the wall seemed solid.

Were they imprisoned with a corpse?

CHAPTER XV.

STARTLING DISCOVERIES.

"Jack, are you there?"

"Right here, Walt! You have been asleep."

"So have you."

"Not much. I have been watching you this last half hour."

"And I watched you over an hour."

"Which means that we've both been asleep. Great Scott! I wish we might stay asleep till some way out of this dreadful snap opened up."

Walter staggered to his feet, for he had been stretched out upon one of the thick Persian rugs which covered the floor of the mysterious chamber.

"It's there still, Jack," he whispered. "Heavens! If we only didn't have to look at it."

"Which I can't help to save me, Walt."

"Same with me. It's horrible! Do you suppose he's our father, Jack?"

Hours had passed, and the boys still found themselves imprisoned with the corpse in the mysterious chamber.

Long before all doubt that death had actually come to their strange companion had vanished, for the body had grown cold and the limbs rigid.

Jack had thrown a covering over the face, for he could not bear to look at it.

Every effort to find the door by which they came into the room had thus far failed.

Thus the hours had been hours of agony.

Worn out by fatigue and anxiety, the boys both slept, although each had been firm in his determination to keep awake.

"Walt, I don't know," answered Jack, in reply to Walter's question. "I own I've thought of this, although I didn't like to say it. Admitting that he spoke the truth when he said that we were brothers, I can hardly believe he can be our father—he's too old."

"You imagine that beard off his face, and you bear a certain resemblance to him, Jack."

"Well, I can't say that I agree with you there, but the same thing struck me about you, Walt."

"Oh, there it is! No one can deny that we look alike. Even O'Dowd noticed it and spoke to me about it. Bless my soul, how hungry I am! I feel as though I hadn't eaten anything in a month."

And Walter began pacing up and down the room like some caged animal, while Jack, who was still sleepy, lay back again upon the rug and closed his eyes.

Did he sleep?

Perhaps so. He never knew. If not actually asleep he was pretty near it, when all at once he was startled by a wild laugh which rang out through the room.

It was Walter.

"Come, come! Wake up, there! Wake up!" he was shouting. "Wake up and have a drink!"

He stood before Jack holding a small decanter in one hand and a glass in the other. In the decanter was a dark, reddish liquid which looked like wine.

Jack was on his feet in an instant, seized with a deadly terror.

The strange words heard in the corridor came back to him with a rush.

"Eat nothing—drink nothing," the voice had said. The voice was that of the woman Lize, and Lize had always hit the truth.

"Put it down! Put it down! Have you forgotten?" cried Jack. "For heaven's sake, don't drink any of that, Walt."

"Don't drink it! Why, it's splendid! I've drank three glasses already. Where have all those people gone—the room was full of them a moment ago?"

Jack heard this with added horror. With a quick movement, he snatched at the decanter, which Walter tried to

retain. In the struggle it fell to the floor, its contents running out upon the rug.

"There! Now see what you have done!" cried Walter. "No matter! Ha, ha, ha! I feel fine! Listen! Don't you hear music, Jack? Ah, here they come! Here they come! Stand aside, Jack! Give them room to pass."

"Oh, Walter, what have you done?" moaned Jack. "Can't you see there's no one here but ourselves?"

"No one here! You must be mad! The room is full of people. How do you do, sir? How do you do? What's that you say? Open the door? Why, certainly. Anything to oblige!"

He did not speak like an intoxicated person, nor did he stagger.

To Jack's amazement, he walked over to one side of the room, and pulling away the hangings, stooped down and began fumbling about the wall.

Suddenly a portion of the stone work moved back, revealing a narrow passage, scarcely high enough to enable a man to pass standing upright.

Without hesitation, Walter crawled through this and disappeared.

"Walter! Walter!" called Jack, rushing forward.

There was no answer.

Beyond the opening a light could be seen, and Jack lost no time in passing through.

A scene so singular, so improbable, met his gaze that we almost hesitate to describe it, yet it must be done.

It was a large room in which Jack now found himself—a room fully fifty feet long, and at least twenty feet in width.

Through the middle ran a tank filled with water, occupying perhaps two-thirds the length and half the width of the room, and surrounded by a low fence about four feet high.

Against the walls here and there around this tank were couches, over which heavy rugs were spread.

Upon several of these couches persons were lying—here a man, there a woman. A hanging lamp, similar to the one in the room behind, shed a mellow light upon the scene.

Of course Jack looked for Walter first of all. He saw that he had flung himself down upon one of the couches.

His eyes were wide open. A curious expression had come over his face. When Jack spoke to him he just put out his hand, making a motion as though to push him away.

"Let me alone!" he murmured. "Don't you see where I am? Beautiful! Beautiful! Oh, this is Paradise! Go away and let me alone."

It was no use to say more. Even the hearty shake which Jack gave the boy was of no avail. Raise him he could not, and curiosity impelled Jack to leave him alone and examine further into this singular place.

He now made the circuit of the tank, examining the faces of all the persons stretched upon the couches, all of whom seemed to be in similar condition to Walter.

It is no use to say that Jack was astonished as he looked upon the faces of the sleepers, for he was not. He had expected something of the sort the moment he entered the room.

Here was Mr. Buttermann—the missing man whose strange disappearance had been the forerunner of all these singular happenings. Here was Harry Halstead; here was Mrs. Grassland and Edith, and others whom Jack did not know. Altogether, there were ten of these strange sleepers, without counting Walter.

Just at this moment a tremendous splashing was heard in the tank.

Of course Jack turned and looked down into it over the fence.

If there was any chance for further amazement after all he had seen, now was the time for it, for there, moving about the tank, was a hideous black form. Jack could not quite believe his eyes.

It was there, though.

Now it turned its huge, scaly body, and blinking its little beady eyes wickedly, flung back its huge jaw, displaying glittering teeth innumerable.

It was a great crocodile—a veritable monster of his kind. For an instant it remained staring at Jack, and then sank beneath the water out of sight.

Jack stood speechless. A cold shudder passed over him from head to foot, but before he had time to think a deep groan behind him had seized his attention.

Turning, he beheld Harry Halstead sitting upright upon the couch staring at him.

"Jack Willing! Great heavens! Jack Willing!" he muttered in a dazed way. "Oh, save me! Save me from this dreadful place."

"Mr. Halstead!" gasped Jack.

"Yes, yes! All there is left of me. If you know the way out, for heaven's sake, tell me before the craze for that infernal drug comes on me again."

"But I don't. I only wish I did."

"Oh, the fiends seize that old wretch! So you're another victim. Come! Come! Follow me. I must have another drink. It's no use! I must."

He sprang up, and clutching Jack's wrist, drew him to the end of the room where there was a door.

"No, no! I can't leave Walter!" protested Jack.

But the young detective did not seem to hear him.

Flinging open the door, he pulled Jack into a large room beyond.

Instantly the boy recognized it as the elegantly furnished salon which he had several times seen, only to have it vanish again like a dream.

But it was dimly lighted now, and deserted save for themselves.

Pulling Jack across the room to a handsomely carved sideboard, Harry Halstead clutched at a decanter, and was about to pour out a portion of its contents into a glass, when suddenly a strange figure seemed to rise at his very feet.

It was old Lize.

Where she had come from, unless, indeed, she had crawled out from under the sideboard, Jack could not guess.

"No more! Drink no more!" she hissed, snatching the decanter from the hand of the young detective, and dashing it to the floor. "I let you fall into this trap, young man, because you insulted me, but now I would save you! Be a man! Follow me!"

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD LIZE TELLS A STRANGE STORY.

"Lize!" gasped Jack, starting away.

"Yes, Lize!" cried the woman. "It is all over now. The old boy is dead, and now we may dance. Never again will those eyes of his make fools of the wise. Come, come! Let us escape while we may, for there are those who would kill us—those who are worse than he."

Jack jumped at the chance.

"Look here, you seem to know everything about this strange place," he exclaimed. "I'm only too glad to go with you, but I can't leave Walter behind."

"Impossible. It is his first dose. I warned you! He may sleep for hours, perhaps days. In time it would not affect him that way, but now he is wholly unconscious. We must leave him there until we can return with those who will put a stop to this evil business forever. Why, some of those you saw sleeping in yonder room have been in this place for years."

"She is right, Willing!" gasped the detective, who was holding his head between his hands. "Old woman, I apologize! Get me out of here, and there's nothing I won't do for you."

"I do it for the sake of these boys—not for yours," sneered Lize. "We will go now."

"Yes, yes! Now—now, while I can control myself. Once let me get a whiff of fresh air, and the craving for that infernal drug will pass."

"What is the drug?" asked Jack. "It can't be opium—"

"No, no! It's worse than opium," said Lize. "It is the East Indian bhang. Few know it in this country. But before we go I want to speak."

"Can't you speak afterward?" cried Halstead. "I shall go mad in a minute and jump into the crocodile tank! I know I shall!"

"Then you would not be the first madman in this strange place," said Lize solemnly. "No, I will not make a move until I have disclosed all, for I may never live to reach the open air again, and then this poor boy would never know the truth."

"Tell your story, quick, then, for heaven's sake!" groaned Halstead, pacing up and down. "Oh, my head! My head!"

"Tell it, Lize," said Jack reassuringly. "I trust entirely to you."

"I shall tell as much as I like, and no more," replied Lize.

"I have no more love for long yarns than any one else, but I will say my say. Jack Willing, know me now for what I am. I am your blood relation. That old wretch who lies dead in yonder room is my brother. Your father was his son."

"Then he is my grandfather!" cried Jack.

"Hush, hush! Not so loud! Yes, it is so. He was wicked, but he was also mad—he was mad. Listen!"

"I'm listening. Tell me his name."

"John Marlowe."

"Ah! The name in the paper left by Walter's adopted father. Then Walter—"

"Is your brother."

"He told the truth."

"Did he tell you that?"

"He did. He was about to tell more when he suddenly pressed his hand to his heart and died."

"Then it worked as I supposed it would, I was determined that you boys should come here, for I thought once he saw you he would give you your rights. Do you know how long he has lived this way?"

"No—how should I?"

"Hurry! Oh, hurry!" groaned Halstead. "You are not telling your story at all."

"But I will," answered Lize. "The secret of this place may be told in a few words. My brother was born rich, and, I believe, born half mad. To put it at its mildest, in the language of the day, he would be called a crank. I declare he was the worst crank who ever breathed."

"Years ago he went to Egypt to study magic, for it was in that direction that his peculiarity ran. To me he has often explained that magic and mesmerism are the same thing. I neither know nor care whether that is true or not, but this much I do know—John Marlowe went crazy on mesmerism. You have seen strange things in this house, my boy. Do you know how you were made to believe that you saw them, when you actually saw nothing of the sort?"

"I suppose you mean that he mesmerized me?"

"I mean this. So expert did he become that he could make me believe that he saw anything merely by fixing his eyes upon the person he desired to control."

"It's so!" cried Halstead. "I can swear to it. He did it to me!"

"And so can Mrs. Grassland—so can Edith, her daughter—so can others here—so can I," continued Lize. "John Marlowe owned this house, and when he returned from Egypt twenty years ago, he fitted up these underground rooms. Why, do you suppose?"

"Go on, go on!" cried the detective.

"Because he was mad on this hobby and another," Lize went on. "He wanted full swing to exercise his mesmeric powers. Moreover, he had come to believe in the ridiculous religious notions of the ancient Egyptians, who worshipped the crocodile, among other beasts. It is hard to believe these things, yet they are true."

"Of course he was mad, yet there was method in his madness. He has been for years writing on a book treating of these matters. It is the use of this drug that drove him mad and kept him mad. This is the whole secret of this place. The crocodile out there he brought from Egypt with him. It was young then, but now—"

"Oh, never mind about that!" exclaimed Jack. "Tell me about myself."

"There is little to tell about you," replied the woman. "Your father died suddenly when you were a mere baby. Walter is your twin brother; your mother died in giving you birth. Not wishing to be burdened with babies, my brother gave you to a friend in England to take charge of, and at the same time placed Walter in charge of Mr. Ryman, who was your father's friend. Money was placed in the hands of Mr. Buttermann for your support, but in Walter's case this was not necessary, for Mr. Ryman was already rich, and promised to make the boy his heir."

"Which he did," said Jack.

"I know it. I have watched the boy always."

"But—"

"Wait! One word more. My brother about that time led the world to believe that he was dead. He caused his own death notice to be published. Actually, he shut himself in the underground apartments, where I lived with him for a long time, for I, like himself, had become a slave to the drug. At last I broke away and swore I would never touch it again. Since then I have wandered about until—"

"It's no use; I can stand it no longer!" cried Harry Halstead. "We must start now or I shall go mad myself."

"Let us go, then. There is but little left to tell," answered Lize, as she led the way across the room, pushing aside a curtain in one corner and disclosing a door.

"We cannot escape by the way you came," she whispered. "Do not fancy my brother lived alone here with these victims, whom from time to time he inveigled into his den that he might practice his strange power upon them. There are those in this place whom he paid most liberally. They will prevent our escape if possible, but there is a way."

"Then for heaven's sake, show it to us!" said Jack. "I feel as Mr. Halstead feels. If this thing keeps up much longer I shall go mad, too."

But Lize, instead of answering, opened the door. Beyond was a narrow passage bricked up on the sides.

"This leads to the river," she whispered. "It is this way that his creatures bring in the provisions which keep these people alive. We may have to fight for freedom. The passage through the house is guarded. It is this way or not at all."

"Must we go in the dark?" asked Jack.

"We must! Follow me."

They could no longer see her a minute after they started, but they could hear her footsteps, and they followed her.

For some minutes they continued. Jack, who was keen to observe, knew that they were descending. At last they seemed to strike a level, and for a few minutes continued to advance, until at last they heard the woman pause.

"Have either of you got a match?" she whispered. "I think we have gone far enough. We must have a light now."

"I have," replied Jack.

"Then light it as softly as possible."

Jack struck the match upon his trousers.

As the flame flashed up Lize gave a sharp cry.

No need to ask the reason.

It was plain enough.

There, right before them, stood a negro of gigantic stature. His eyes flashed wickedly. In his hand he held a cocked revolver.

"What's this? What's this?" he cried. "No use, folks. Yo' kean't pass here!"

CHAPTER XVII.

O'DOWD AGAIN.

It is Walter we have to deal with now.

He is sitting on the couch, rubbing his eyes and looking very much perplexed.

"Who are you?" he mutters, staring at a dusky face thrust close to his.

Then suddenly he comes to the consciousness that he is not alone, that there are other people sitting on other couches rubbing their eyes, and—if he did but know it—looking just as stupid as he did.

He sees all this as one sees persons and places in a dream; he hears the splashing of the crocodile in the tank also, but he has not the faintest idea what all this can mean when he puts the question for the third time:

"Who are you?"

Now, contrary to Jack's belief, Walter had not partaken of the drugged wine to any extent.

He found the decanter, and forgetting the warning voice, took one or two swallows out of it, being very thirsty.

Then all at once the recollection of the warning came to him, but it came too late, for within a moment or two after that Walter was no longer Walter, but some one else altogether.

Of all that had taken place from that moment until now, when he suddenly felt some one shaking him, he knew nothing at all.

"Get up! Yo' want to get up!" said the darky.

Dazed though he was, Walter recognized him as the same man he had seen in the mysterious room.

He held a small flask in one hand and a tiny tumbler in the other. From the tumbler he had just poured a portion of the grayish liquid which the flask contained down Walter's throat, and, had the boy been awake to see, he would have known that the darky had done the same to each person present in the room.

"What's the matter? Where's Jack?" stammered Walter, scarcely knowing what he said.

But the darky had moved away from him by this time.

Placing the flask and bottle on a shelf, he turned and addressed the sleepy looking group.

"Looker hyar, frien's!" he exclaimed. "De ole man has done gone croaked! He's deadern' a hammer, he is. I'se sick ob dis business. T'other feller is fo' holdin' on; he t'ink de ole man come ter life ag'in. I say he won't. I'se gwine ter set youse all free, an' ef you take my advice you'll jes' skip outer this quick 's ever you can, for onct de perlice ketches onter dis yere, dere'll be trouble, suah."

"Sam," stammered Mr. Butterman, rising and staggering forward. "if you'll put us safely outside, I'll give you a thousand dollars, my man."

"I'se gwine ter do it, boss."

"Is he really dead?"

"He am."

"Then heaven be praised! You have given us the antidote——"

"I'se done gone gib yo' de anecdote ob mv own free will, massa. Dis yere is yo' las' chance."

"Then lead the way, my good man, and for heaven's sake be quick!" faltered the old lawyer. "Even now the craze for that infernal drug is upon me. Merciful power! I wish I might have died before I came to this evil place! Ha! A newcomer! Who is this boy?"

He paused before Walter and looked at his face fixedly.

"You are not Jack Willing?" he said.

"No, sir!" stammered Walter, who was not more than half himself even yet.

"Great heavens! Then you must be the other! Say——"

"Say, boss! Come along, now, ef yous a-comin'!" cried Sam, throwing open a door.

At the same instant Mrs. Grassland, holding her daughter's hand, tottered forward.

"You—you won't leave us behind," she faltered. "We are to go, too?"

"Ebery one goes what wants to," cried Sam, and every one of the poor drug-sodden wretches seemed to want to go, for all staggered to their feet.

They were a curious-looking assemblage.

Several of them were dressed in fantastic garments, and—— But we cannot pause to describe them. They have nothing to do with our story, which must be hurried on to a close.

Now Sam led the way through the door into one of those horrible passages.

Mr. Butterman tottered after him. Edith and her mother came next, then Walter and the others in single file after him.

Now, Walter had no realizing sense of all these happenings. His brain was still horribly muddled.

Jack—Jack! Where was Jack?

This was all he could think about.

Twice he put the question to Sam, but received no answer. When he tried it the third time, the darky called back:

"Hole on, dar! No talkin' hyar. Dunno whar yo' frien' am. He's done gone off somewheres. Much as I kin do to look after you."

"Hush, my boy!" added Mr. Butterman. "If there's a chance for escape let us embrace it. We will look into your friend's case later on."

Indeed, the old lawyer seemed to be the clearest head of all that strange procession. Yet he appeared very feeble. His limbs trembled so that he could scarcely walk.

Slowly they moved on to the end of the passage.

Here Sam paused to listen, and at last, announcing that the coast was clear, opened another door and led the way up a narrow flight of stairs, and the next Walter knew he found himself coming out into the haunted chamber. They were leaving the place by the same way he had entered.

In a minute they were all gathered there, for Sam had paused.

"We'se gotter go slow," he breathed. "De perlice was in de house a while ago, an' dey's been hangin' around hyar eber sense. Dey may have come back, an'—— Oh, good gollys! Dey's hyar now!"

Suddenly through the open door five policemen burst into the room, headed by Detective O'Dowd.

"Hold on, there. You're all under arrest!" he shouted. "First of all, I want that boy!"

Was it the drug still working in Walter's brain?

Probably it was more than anything else, for certain

It is that the moment Walter caught sight of O'Dowd he seemed to lose all control of himself.

All thoughts of the others appeared to vanish.

He could think only of saving himself from the detective's hands, and he sprang back through the opening behind the chimney, and went dashing down the secret stairs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JACK AND THE GIANT.

"Hol' on, dar! Hol' on! Yo' kean't pass hyar!"

These were the words heard by Jack Willing, Harry Halstead, the detective, and old Lize, the moment the match flashed up, and the sight of that gigantic black with his revolver raised, struck terror to Jack's heart.

Was it all over. He had hoped for so much, and now to have his hopes dashed to the ground was horrible.

The match dropped from his nerveless hand, expiring as it fell.

"Stop, Caesar! It's only me!" whined the old hag. "You wouldn't kill your master's sister—your old friend, Lize?"

You's been no friend to nobody dese five years!" answered the voice, out of the darkness.

Then in the same instant a light flashed, revealing the negro with a dark lantern in his hand.

Lize seemed to be absolutely terror-stricken.

"Let us go—let us go!" she whined. "He is dead, Caesar. This is his grandson—this is Master John's son. You remember John."

"Who says he's dead?" cried the black. "I don' believe it."

"It's so. Oh, it's so!"

"Then yo' killed him."

"No, no!"

"Yo' did! Yo' killed him, an' I'll kill yo'!"

He raised the revolver again, and fired without the slightest hesitation.

"Oh, heaven have mercy on me! I'm shot!" screamed the wretched woman, sinking to the floor.

It was an awful moment.

Jack stood like one paralyzed.

But the crack of the revolver seemed to rouse Harry Halstead to something of his old courage.

"You black fiend!" he shouted, darting forward. "You shall pay for this."

It was a bold move, but an unsuccessful one.

Crack!

Again Jack heard a shot go echoing through the passage, and Harry Halstead, with a groan, fell beside Lize.

"Now, den, it's yo' turn!" yelled Caesar, leaping upon Jack, and clutching him by the throat before he could raise a finger in self-defense.

As well might poor Jack tried to struggle against a giant as this powerful wretch, whose iron hand now pinned him against the wall.

"Don't yo' move!" he hissed. "I'se serbed de ole massa dese thirty years. I'se been wif him all over de worl'. His enemies am my enemies! If he's dead, an' yo' killed him, I'se gwine ter kill yo'!"

But Jack never said a word.

He could not. All power of speech seemed to have left him. Even to have saved his life the boy could not have uttered a sound.

He believed that death was near, and in that awful moment, instead of thinking of himself, he thought of Walter.

"Oh, if I could only have lived to get free and bring help to him!" were the words which seemed to flash across his brain.

He had expected the fatal shot to come on the instant, and yet a full minute passed and it did not come.

Instead of putting his threat into execution, Caesar flashed the lantern into the boy's face.

"Golly, but you do look like Marse John!" he muttered. "Are you' really his son?"

But Jack did not answer.

Suddenly everything began swimming about him. The next he knew he was being dragged along the passage by Caesar back in the direction he had come.

Had he fainted?

Probably.

Even now he was so weak that if he had been left to himself he would have found it difficult to stand.

"We'll soon see about dis!" he heard Caesar exclaim. "If de ole mars' is dead, den eberybody dies! Dat's what I'm here fo'. To kill! Kill! Kill!"

Was the black drug-crazed like the rest?

In a moment they were back in the secret chamber, and poor Jack's prospects became darker than ever, for the moment they had passed the threshold of the door Caesar set up a dismal yell.

"Oh, he's dead—dead! He's dead!" he moaned. "Speak to me, mass'r! Speak to ole Caesar! Oh, I kean't lib without yer! 'Deed I kean't!"

But for all that his grief was so great, and evidently so real, he never for an instant let go his hold on poor Jack.

"Yo' did die! Yo' did die!" he shouted in a moment. "Now, den, you die, too—Ismail shall eat yo'! Nuffin' can sabe yo' now."

He sprang through the inner door, dragging Jack after him.

Though the room was now deserted, he did not seem to notice it, but hurried to the tank in which Jack, to his intense horror, could hear the great crocodile splashing about.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONCLUSION.

To properly describe the sensations of Jack Willing in that awful moment is beyond the powers of our pen. He was speechless, helpless, stricken with a deadly terror as the gigantic black, dropping revolver and lantern upon the floor, seized him with both hands, and raised him up with the evident intention of tossing him into the tank where the crocodile, scenting his prey, lay upon the surface of the water with open mouth.

Here was the end, Jack thought. Now, nothing could possibly save him. From the moment he had first set foot in this dreadful house until now it had been one continued struggle, but the next moment must finish all.

But no!

Help was nearer at hand than he dreamed.

Suddenly there was a rush, and some one shouted:

"Jack! Jack! Jack!"

Through the door Walter came flying.

He saw Jack, and he recognized his peril, but he seemed to have no more fear of the giant than if he had been a baby. Flinging himself forward, he struck Caesar in the face with all his might, and this so suddenly that the negro had no time to comprehend what was coming until the deed was done.

The blow must have been a blinder, but it was not the cause of what followed.

In the same instant Walter flung his arms about Jack and wrenched him away.

Even as he did so Caesar drew back as though to make a spring, but he forgot that close behind was the low rail surrounding the tank.

There was a wild yell—a splash!

"Oh! Oh! Oh! Save him!" groaned Jack, and then—

Why, then it seemed as though time had suddenly ceased to be, and the next Jack Willing knew he was lying on the parlor-sofa.

Bending over him was Edith Grassland fanning him. Walter stood close to his head. Mr. Buttermann, looking very pale, was near his feet. Besides these there were other persons in the room, and there also was Detective O'Dowd, swaggering up and down.

"These boys are my prisoners!" he was saying. "I don't care a blame what you say about it! They are a couple of—"

"Stop!" cried Mr. Buttermann. "Be careful what you do, my man. These boys are brothers. They have told me their story, and the papers you stole from them are now in my possession. They are the last descendants of John Marlowe, the singular being whose body you saw in the room below, and are heirs to all his wealth. Briefly, my man, they are worth millions, and I will spend the last dollar of it to fight you. Take a fool's advice and drop this business while there is yet time."

For a moment O'Dowd stared at Mr. Buttermann. Then muttering something which was not audible, he left the house, taking his policeman with him, and as this move on

the part of the bumptious detective was the last he made, we propose to bring our story to a close right here.

Days passed before Jack Willing fully recovered from the shock of those last awful moments, and in those days the secrets of the Haunted House on the Harlem were laid bare to the world.

But the newspaper reports given at the time were but garbled affairs at the best.

It was said that John Marlowe was a madman, and the wildest stories were related about him.

Only now is the truth told and this strange person laid before the world.

Indeed, more might be said, but out of regard for Mrs. John Marlowe, formerly Edith Grassland, but now the wife of our hero, we forbear to go into the details disclosed in the voluminous manuscript found in the secret chamber.

The manuscript treated of mesmerism and the mysteries of the ancient Egyptian animal worship. Out of respect for Edith's wishes, Jack threw it in the fire, and the world will never know the full details of the doings in that strange house.

Do you ask us to speak of the fate of Caesar.

He was never again, but the crocodile was shot next morning by a man whom Mr. Butterman engaged for the purpose, for the old lawyer immediately took charge of affairs.

Of course Jack told his story, and search was made for the secret passage through which he had, in company with old Lize and Harry Halstead, attempted to escape.

It was readily found, and traced to its end, which proved to be the cellar of a small cottage on the bank of the Harlem.

Here Caesar had lived alone, the dread of all the neighborhood, and were we disposed to go into details, many are the strange stories we could relate about the murderous black—stories heard by Jack later on.

In the passage the dead body of old Lize was discovered, but Harry Halstead was not dead. They took him out unconscious with a bullet in his neck, but after a tedious illness the young detective fully recovered, and in time resumed his old place on the force.

Did Mr. Butterman know of the existence of John Marlowe when he took Jack to the haunted house.

We are obliged to admit that he did. He had known it all along, and met the men in the haunted room from time to time.

It was by Marlowe's order that Jack had been brought from France.

He thought himself dying at the time, and sent for the lawyer. Later he recovered, and determined that his grandson should be abandoned to his fate. Hence, when Mr. Butterman put in an appearance that day, he brought his strange powers to bear upon him, and by force of will caused the lawyer to follow him into the room below, there to join the wretched victims of his strange craze.

But Mrs. Grassland's case was the most singular.

The widow had hired the house in good faith, and was altogether ignorant of its bad reputation.

The cause of her strange actions on the night on which Edith disappeared may be summed up in three words.

She was mesmerized.

Upon entering the haunted chamber she encountered Marlowe.

One glance of his eyes was sufficient.

From that moment Mrs. Grassland knew nothing, so she declared.

She had no recollection of returning to Jack, or of dismissing her servants, as was afterwards proved she actually did do. Nor could she tell how she subsequently came to be in the underground rooms.

Doubtless Sam, the darky, could have told, but in the confusion which followed the encounter with O'Dowd, Sam managed to take himself off, and was never seen again.

Thus one thing, which more than all else puzzled Jack, namely, how she knew that Walter was to be under the High Bridge at a certain hour on the night the boys first met was never made plain.

Of course Harry Halstead was mesmerized, and Edith, too. Their capture had been easy work.

It was the same, no doubt, with Jack, when he thought he saw that ghostly dinner party in the haunted chamber.

But enough of this. Mesmerism fully accounts for it all, for the skillful mesmerist can make a man believe he sees and hears whatever he chooses, and probably no man more skilled in mind control than Jack Marlowe ever lived.

Of course when Jack came to think matters over, he was not altogether pleased with the conduct of Mr. Batterman.

But in consideration of the prompt and skillful manner in which the old lawyer managed affairs afterward, he was willing to pass this over.

He disengaged himself from the man as soon as possible, however, and after that saw nothing of him. But this was partly owing to the fact that Mr. Butterman soon left New York, for his brother lawyers were beginning to give him the cold shoulder, owing to his long connection with a client who certainly ought to have been handed over to the police.

Nothing more was ever heard from O'Dowd, and in due time Walter inherited all his adopted father's wealth, which, added to his share of John Marlowe's estate, made him much richer than Jack.

To Jack fell the old mansion, and his first care was to pull it down, for he was only too anxious to forget himself and have the world forget, the dark doings which occurred within its walls.

Next week's issue will contain "JACK WRIGHT AND HIS OCEAN PLUNGER; OR, THE HARPOON HUNTERS OF THE ARCTIC."

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your weekly copy of "PLUCK AND LUCK." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this weekly every week, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

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HELP YOUR COUNTRY!

ELECTRIC WELDING AND CARGO CAPACITY.

The Electric Welding Committee of the United States Shipping Board, speaking of the economic saving due to electric welding, refers to the fact that in a 5,000-ton ship about 450,000 rivets are used, and about 650,000 in a ship of 9,500 tons dead-weight. The saving on the hull-plating and other vital parts in labor, cost, and time of construction, due to the substitution of welding for riveting, is conservatively placed at 25 per cent. The saving of labor on the minor parts of the ship is estimated to be from 60 to 70 per cent. There is also a considerable saving in weight, which is estimated to be about 500 tons on the hull of a 9,500-ton ship. This, of course, would mean that the ship could carry 500 tons more cargo.

SOME FACTS ABOUT WAR INSURANCE.

Any man or woman of any age in the active military or naval service of the United States can obtain Government insurance. It has been ruled that members of Officers' Training Camps are under the act and can obtain insurance. The cost for each thousand dollars of insurance is from sixty-five cents a month to persons at the age of twenty-one to one dollar and twenty cents a month to those of the age of fifty-one.

The beneficiaries are limited to wife, husband, child, grandchild, brother or sister, stepbrother or stepsister, adopted brother or adopted sister of the insured, as well as parent, grandparent, or step-parent either of the insured or of his or her consort.

The insurance is not compulsory, but the cost is low and the protection great, and not only are all persons eligible afforded every opportunity to obtain this insurance without trouble or extra expense but they are specially urged to do so.

Gen. Pershing and thousands of other officers and tens of thousands of soldiers have already taken out insurance. Up to date policies of insurance have been issued aggregating \$1,032,938,000.

GIRL WAR WORKERS AS STUDENTS.

Four hundred girl war workers in Washington are now members of the evening classes at the Y. M. C. A. In this number are many who are preparing for college, although the majority is enrolled for business courses.

Recently special training has been provided for statisticians, who will be much needed after the war, and among the students is a fair representation of women. The School of Accountancy is perhaps the most popular outside of the classes in stenography. Under Thomas W. Walton, Director of Education, this branch has been developed so that it includes applied economics, corporation accounting and

finance, cost accounting, advanced theory of accounting, elements of auditing, advanced auditing and scientific and industrial management. The full course is for three years of two semesters each, the semester covering seventeen weeks, two evenings each week.

And through the Y. M. C. A. girls employed by the Government have not only the advantage of vocational training, but the best possible opportunity to continue their studies. Offices close at not later than 4.30, and the classes each day are arranged between the hours of 5 and 10. To supplement the Preparatory School, the School of Accountancy, the Commercial School and the Grade School, a School of Special Courses is provided. These include drafting, Spanish, French and Latin.

SUGAR ALLOTMENT.

By increasing the monthly allotment of sugar from two to three pounds of sugar per capita on November 1, the Food Administration emphatically declares that this must not be taken as meaning that the conservation of foodstuffs generally is not now fully as important as it was at the height of the sugar shortage. While the sugar situation has improved largely, due to the splendid aid of the American housewife in reducing consumption, and also by the availability of new domestic cane and beet sugar, the need for greater exports in other lines is no less marked. The United States must increase the food exports by one-half from a harvest no larger than last year's.

The prominent part which the American woman has played in conserving sugar is best understood by a comparison of our consumption of sugar during the past four months with the consumption for a similar period in normal times. Normal consumption of sugar for the months of July, August, September and October was approximately 400,000 tons per month, or 1,600,000 tons for the four months. Following the appeal for sugar conservation there was saved approximately 300,000 tons during that period of this year. Seventy per cent. of the sugar consumed in the United States is used in the home.

In connection with the three-pound sugar rule for ninety meals, general order No. 9 for public eating places, state hotel chairmen have been advised that part of general order No. 8, covering quantity served, is changed to read "In no event shall the amount served to any one person at any one meal exceed one-half ounce." Hotel chairmen have also been advised that sugar service now authorized under general order No. 8 is one teaspoonful or its equivalent for tea or coffee plus one teaspoonful for fruit or cereal, but not for both fruit and cereal. One small lump for demi-tasse.

CURRENT NEWS

APPEARANCES DO DECEIVE.

Muscles don't always bulge. A young woman in a freight office at Butte, Mont., resembles a sixteen-year-old boy in her working clothes. In her "off-hour" dress she is very much a woman, a woman of pleasing appearance. She weighs only 130 pounds, is 5 feet four inches tall and has feet and hands smaller than those of the average woman. But when she works! To pick up a 900-pound piano with her truck and run off with it is play for this Amazon, says the delighted foreman.

ASKS JUDGE NOT TO KISS BRIDE-TO-BE.

Robert Adair Campbell stood before a judge in Chicago, with his bride-to-be, Miss May Blanche Barnet.

"We want to be married," he said, "but we do not want the judicial kiss which is customary at such times."

The judge smiled and tied the knot, contenting himself with the usual fee, which Campbell paid and fled.

SWALLOWED PIN IN BREAD.

Fox Baking Company, York, Pa., is the defendant in a suit for damages brought by Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Kohr in the Common Pleas Court the other day. Mrs. Kohr alleges that she swallowed a pin while eating bread baked by the defendant company. She later underwent an operation for appendicitis, and the pin was found in the appendix. She claims damages for personal injuries.

LOSS OF LEG BRINGS RELIEF.

R. A. Robins of Salem, Ark., who has for many years been crippled by rheumatism and who moved about in an invalid's chair, was sitting quietly in his chair one Sunday morning recently when he moved his diseased leg very slightly and it broke in two. Surgeons were summoned and the leg was amputated, bringing relief from a condition which had caused trouble to the victim since childhood.

HORNETS AT DANCE.

The quickest one-step ever released was given recently at the home of Miss Mildred Quillin, near Greenwood, Del., when a hornets' nest, gilded and hung in the parlor, suddenly became alive when the room became heated and mingled with the guests who were dancing on the floor.

Miss Quillin was giving an evening party, and as a part of the decoration had hung up a gilded hornets' nest found in the woods by a cousin. It was during the evening while the guests were dancing

that the supposedly dead nest became alive, and the room was suddenly filled with awakened hornets.

Some went out through the doors and some through the windows. Anyway, all got out safely and the hornets were driven outside, where they quickly succumbed to the cold weather.

MONSTER LEVIATHAN CARRIED 94,195 MEN ACROSS TO FRANCE.

The giant steamer Leviathan, formerly the Hamburg-American liner Vaterland, transported 94,195 American fighting men to France since she first sailed from New York as an American transport on Dec. 15, 1917, until Nov. 5, when she was laid up in Liverpool for her overhauling.

During her service of 23 days, she landed an average of 399 American soldiers on French soil daily, counting her days in port on both sides of the Atlantic and at sea. The average aggregated a little more than a German division of 12,000 men every month. She made nine and a half round trips and transported 9,419 men with their equipment and some cargo on every outward voyage. She had been worked harder than any vessel of her size—54,000 tons—was ever worked before. After her seizure by the United States, naval engineers repaired her machinery damaged by the German crew and made a decided improvement over the original.

The fastest round trip made by the Leviathan was seventeen days.

PENCIL MAKING IN MADRAS.

The government of Madras has decided that the experiments which have been made by the department of industries for the last three years in the manufacture of pencils have reached a stage at which the industry should be made over to private enterprise. Arrangements for the sale of pencils produced by the factory were completed in August, 1917, and the profit and loss statement prepared by the auditors for the period from September 1, 1917, to March 3, 1918, shows that in these seven months the factory made a profit of \$1,904, which represents a return of a little over 20 per cent. on an assumed capital of \$16,220. During the same period the factory produced 7,599 gross of pencils and sold 8,269 gross. The factory has deliberately been run on as small a scale as was consistent with the purpose in view, namely, the demonstration on commercial lines of the prospect of the industry. The factory produces black lead pencils lacquered in various colors, copying pencils, carpenters' pencils and diary pencils. Experiments with red and blue pencils are under way.

FROM ALL POINTS

PATRIOTIC INDIAN NOW.

"Poor Lo" the Indian, is no more poor. Instead he is patriotic. The five civilized tribes subscribed for \$2,600,000 in the Fourth Liberty bonds, Gabe Parker, Superintendent of the tribes, announced. The five tribes—Choctaws, Chickasaws, Seminoles, Cherokees and Creeks—have now invested some \$9,523,670 in Liberty bonds and War Savings stamps.

HOG WITH FIVE FEET.

Bennie Dearmore, son of Lee Dearmore a farmer, who lives west of Mountain Home, Ark., says that he has a hog which he has no trouble keeping track of.

It makes a track different from any hog in Baxter County. It is a five-footed hog, and makes five tracks. The extra foot extends out just below the knee of its right foreleg, and touches the ground the same as the regular foot on that leg. In other ways the animal is normal and large enough to kill. None of the other pigs in the litter in which it was born was deformed.

QUICKSILVER DEPOSITS IN ARIZONA.

The present exceptional demand for quicksilver in the manufacture of fulminate gives the domestic deposits of this metal particular interest. Deposits recently discovered in the southern part of the Phoenix Mountains, ten miles northeast of Phoenix, Ariz., are described in a short paper prepared by F. C. Schrader, just published by the United States Geological Survey. The deposits are easy of access, and, being near the rich agricultural region of Salt River Valley, are otherwise favorably situated for mining. They are being exploited on six or more properties or groups of claims, which lie in a belt, about three miles wide.

BRITISH DEVELOPMENT OF MESOPOTAMIA.

In spite of war conditions this year's harvest in Mesopotamia is expected to be the greatest in many years. The British are reported to have dug out more than 100 canals formerly used for irrigation purposes in connection with the River Euphrates but disused for many years. Some 320,000 acres have been brought afresh under cultivation.

Since the British occupation Bagdad is full of life; construction work is being carried on early and late and thousands of workmen are repaving the streets and installing electric light and sanitation. A fire brigade and a police force have been organized. The supply of pure water is assured, the water pipes being constantly extended. Many other improvements have been inaugurated.

And so ancient ruins blossom forth most modernly.

AIDS WOMEN TO DISCOVER THEMSELVES.

The United States Employment Service not only helps a woman to find a job, but in many cases the service helps a woman to find herself. The average woman who has never earned a dollar in her life is very often under the impression she is not qualified for any vocation, yet she may have had real training. Here is a case in point. A woman of refinement called at a United States employment office in New York City, said she had no qualifications, had never earned money, and asked for suggestions on what kind of training to take. The examiner in charge questioned the woman very carefully and discovered she had done considerable research work in the last four years on some important law cases for her husband and had also done a great deal of statistical work for him. The examiner found the applicant a place at \$100 a month doing statistical work. In a short time the woman was promoted to a \$1,800 a year job. In less than a year this woman qualified so successfully she is now holding down a \$3,000 job.

NAVY WILL RETURN COLLEGE STUDENTS.

Secretary Daniels announced on Nov. 14 that men who left college to enter the naval service and who now desire to resume their college courses, will be permitted to resign from the service. Such men, Mr. Daniels said, should make application to their commanding officers. In response to specific questions as to the future of the yachts and small craft comprising a part of the coast patrol fleet, Mr. Daniels said: "No orders have yet been issued to the naval district commanders. It is quite possible they are permitting the boys to come in from time to time. The whole question of the disposition of small craft taken into the service for the period of the war is now under consideration. About 100 yachts and other craft are in the service at one dollar a year. These will be turned back as quickly as possible in first class condition. Until the situation clears there will be no letting down in the Navy."

There is exhibited in the National Museum at Washington a sapphire weighing nine karats, which contains a bubble that appears and disappears with changes of temperature. It is believed that a cavity in the gem incloses a quantity of carbonic acid gas under great pressure. When the temperature is such as to correspond with the "critical point" for that gas, under the particular pressure to which it is subjected in its brilliant prison house, it liquefies and becomes visible as a bubble.

AFTER BLACK DIAMONDS

—OR—

THE BOYS OF COAL SHAFT NO. 3

By WILLIAM WADE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER I.

BOB MUST EXPLAIN LETTER.

"Coming downtown this evening?"

"Yes. I'll be down as soon as I wash up a little. I want to talk with you, anyhow!" called back Bob Newton.

He and Jim Norcross, his buddy in the mine, had just walked home from their day's work, and were parting at the corner when Norcross asked the question.

"Hello, mother!" called a cheery voice a moment later, as Bob Newton crossed the threshold of their little home, and saw his mother bending over her sewing in a rear room.

The woman looked up and smiled at the boy, glad to see him, and her hands dropped into her lap as she waited for him to put down his lunch bucket and come over to kiss her, as was his daily custom.

"Glad to see me, eh, mother dear?" taking her hands in his, the sewing and all clasped in his grasp.

"Always, Robert," smiled the mother, big tears in her eyes.

The boy stooped over her and kissed her forehead again, dropped her hands, and started for the rear of the house to wash up for the evening.

"Are you going downtown, Robert?" asked the woman from within.

The young fellow replied in the affirmative, and the woman laid aside her sewing to prepare his evening meal for him.

"Don't be in a hurry for my supper, mother," called young Newton. "I'll probably be back early enough."

"No, you won't, Robert!" and there was a laugh in her voice. "I've heard that so often and you rarely get back in time. We had better have supper right away, and then I'll be certain that you've had it!"

The evening meal was prepared in a short while, and the two, mother and son, sat down to the frugal repast.

"What are the men going to do about that weighing matter?" she asked, while they were eating.

"I don't think it'll amount to very much."

"But there are so many wild heads amongst them," said the mother.

"And there are so many cool heads that they'll keep down the friction," answered the young fellow.

"But you know the last strike was started altogether by the hot-heads getting control of the meeting that night."

"They'll never get control again. Didn't the men

suffer the most in the last strike? And don't you think they remember all that?"

"What will we do in case they strike?" she asked. "Here the winter season is coming on, and a strike would mean that we wouldn't have enough to eat nor enough to keep us warm."

"Don't begin worrying about that, mother, dearie," smiled the young man. "There won't be any strike, in my opinion, for the men, as I say, haven't forgotten the last one. We got the worst of that, even if we did win."

When the evening meal was finished the young fellow took down his hat, kissed his mother good-by, and walked out of the house to the street.

They reached Stamm's corner, Jim and Robert, for they met, quite by accident, at the corner near Robert's home.

"What is there to do, especially?" asked Jim.

"I think we'd better go up to the local hall. I'd like to see what the men are thinking of doing about that weighing business," answered Robert.

The two young fellows turned the corner to Locust street, and went over to the hall, finding quite a few miners already there, for evening had drawn down to earth and the lights of the city were being lighted.

"Good-evening!" called Robert, walking into the hall and going its full length to where the men had gathered about in a bunch to discuss the matter.

Henry Stanton, one of the younger miners, a fellow slightly older than either Robert Newton or James Norcross, scowled as the two boys came up.

Robert dropped into a chair which he dragged up to the miners, and listened to the discussion.

"They're robbing us day and night, right under our very noses," said Stanton, carrying out a point which one of the rougher miners had just made.

"Dat's r-right! Robbing us mit our noses!" exclaimed one of the foreign miners, bringing a fist down on the side of the table near which he was sitting.

"How is that?" asked Robert. "Don't we load our cars in the same way?"

"Yah, de same vay! Ve loat yust de same and dey doan' gif us de same pounts as always vas!"

Again the fellow brought his fist down on the table.

"How do you know you do not get your right weight?" asked Robert.

"Pecause, py golly, I vatch how motch I put in! I know, py yiminy, I know vot I put in, und dere iss not pounts like I loat!"

Once more the fist reached the table with a resounding whack.

"How much do you think you are short each time?" continued the boy.

"Py yiminy, I vas short by fife huntert und ein tousand pounts!"

"Who do you think gets that?"

"Gets dat? Gets dat? Py golly, Merlin gets dat! Dat's who gets dat! Dat's vy he roons around mit an auto car!"

(To be continued.)

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

WASHWOMAN LEARNING STENOGRAPHY.

Working side by side with young men and young women, young enough to be her grandchildren, Mrs. Ethel Hicks, for years a washerwoman in Lamont, Ia., is taking a course of stenography in a local business college. She intends following it instead of her former profitable business.

LIVED AS A HERMIT TO ESCAPE SERVICE.

Since June, 1917, Alfred H. Behrmann, aged thirty-one years, told the police who arrested him he had been living as a hermit in the mountains of California, with a tent as his home, where he fled to evade the Draft Law. Now that the war was over, he said, his conscience would not permit him to go free, wherefore he surrendered himself to the authorities.

BIG BLACKFISH.

William Walsh of the Division of the Naval Reserve stationed at Nantucket, astride of a stranded blackfish, gives an idea of the size and appearance of the fish which have this year visited Nantucket for the first time in forty-four years. Two schools of the fish have so far been stranded on the north shore of the island this summer, the first in early July and the second recently.

The second school was the larger, being made up of about seventy-five fish, while the first counted up fifty-six. The heaviest of the first weighed over 3,000 pounds. The fish was not dead, but merely stranded. Walsh got it into deep water and took a ride upon it some quarter of a mile or more out to sea.

FACTS ABOUT WATCHES.

"I frequently get interesting watches to repair," remarked a jeweler. "Here is one, for instance, with diamond jewels and, would you believe it, notwithstanding the hardness of the diamond, diamond jewels do not wear as well as the jewels found in the ordinary watch, the sapphire or ruby jewels. Many people place an exaggerated value on their watches because the latter have diamond jewels. A few years ago a collector of watches showed me a watch which had been picked up on the battlefield of Waterloo. The watch was a most elaborate affair, having a beautifully chased movement and diamond jewels. The jewels had actually been worn through by the steel pivot. Diamonds are all right as ornaments and in the form of bort are very serviceable for many mechanical purposes, but for watch jewels the diamond is more ornamental than useful."

STRANGE STORY TOLD IN LETTER.

According to a letter received by his parents at Barrow from Joe Johnston, on the U. S. S. Tow-

happen, the naval collier Cyclops, which mysteriously disappeared early last spring while en route from South America to the United States with manganese and passengers, has been found in the Kiel Canal, where the collier was taken by the Germans who captured her.

Johnston wrote under the date of Nov. 26 from Newport News to his mother as follows:

"I suppose you know by this time they have found the Cyclops in the Kiel Canal, where the Germans had her. I was talking to a fellow from the U. S. S. Orion and she is leaving soon to go over and put the Cyclops back into commission. They are taking on coal, oil, wireless equipment and a large amount of supplies, and if the engines are disabled beyond temporary repairs will tow her back to the United States."

ENORMOUS BASKING SHARK WEIGHS TONS.

The taking in Monterey Bay, California, by the Santa Cruz fishermen of a huge basking shark weighing almost two tons, a fish 18½ feet long, calls attention to how big these species grow. According to Dr. David Starr Jordan, the basking shark reaches a length of 36 feet.

Dr. Jordan writes: "It is a dull and sluggish animal of the northern seas, almost as inert as a sawlog, often floating slowly southward in pairs in the spring and caught occasionally by whalers for its liver.

"When caught its huge flabby head spreads out wide on the ground, its weight in connection with the great size of the mouth cavity rendering it shapeless.

"Although so clumsy and without spirit, it is said that a blow with its tail will crush an ordinary whaleboat.

"The basking shark is known on all northern coasts, but has most frequently been taken in the North Sea and about Monterey Bay in California. From this locality specimens have been sent to the chief museums of Europe.

"In its external characters the basking shark has much in common with the man eater. Its body is, however, relatively clumsy forward; its fins are lower and its gill openings are much broader, almost meeting under the throat.

"The great difference lies in the teeth, which in Cetorhinus are very small and weak, about 200 in each row. The basking shark, also called elephant shark and bone shark, does not pursue its prey, but feeds on small creatures to be taken without effort.

"Fossil teeth of Cetorhinus have been found from the Cretaceous, as also fossil gill rakers, structures which in this shark are so long as to suggest whalebone."

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, JANUARY 1, 1919.

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

Mrs. C. N. Newell, eighty years old, is the champion knitter of Cleveland, O. Although she is decidedly past the age when most women do much knitting, Mrs. Newell has set a mark of 175 pairs of soldiers' socks and ten soldiers' helmets in the last twelve months.

Salina citizens now get their groceries from the "Black Maria," which formerly hauled prisoners to the police station. "Business" has fallen off so much that the vehicle, bought some time ago, has been sold. The City Jail was empty for several months before the decision was reached. Now the County Jail in this "dry" country also is void of inhabitants.

The wife of the Rev. Elijah Torrants, a negro minister of Evansville, Ind., has been arrested by the local police on a charge of bringing liquor into Indiana from Henderson, Ky., in violation of the State Prohibition law. When searched at the police station it was found that the woman had a large hot water bottle filled with whiskey, which was used by her as a bustle. Mrs. Torrants said she brought the whisky here as influenze medicine.

The old boots and shoes that are cast into the dustbin have considerable value. They are soaked in water to remove the dirt, all the nails and threads are picked out and the leather is reduced to a thick pulp, from which wall papers, screens, etc., are made. The finer the original quality of leather the better it takes the bronze and old gold of the designs which make these hangings things of beauty. Bookbinders and framemakers also know the value of this pulp, and carriage builders press it into sheets which are invaluable for the roofs of the most luxurious vehicles.

One Friday morning recently Filipinos snaring eels and other fish in the Pasig near the old captain

of the port building by the aid of fish snares caught the largest eel ever seen on the waterfront. It was fully ten feet in length. Both banks of the Pasig and all the ships and lighters moored in the stream were thronged with hundreds of Filipinos with snares and spears trying to catch the fish that in myriads were swimming near the surface of the stream. Natives when asked in regard to the phenomenon were almost unanimous in their statement to the effect that at this time of the year the bottom of the river gets hot and that the fish have to leave the depths of the stream and flash back and forth on or near the surface. Another theory that seemed to have a great many adherents was to the effect that at this time every year there was a change in the character of the water, this change acting on the fish as a stimulant. This theory was advanced by an old pilot who has witnessed the phenomenon for many years.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Cecile—Professor, do you believe there are microbes in kisses? The Professor—I don't know; but it is a matter I should very much like to investigate.

"What is the most important thing about handling a sailboat?" The old salt looked the novice over thoughtfully and then replied, "Knowing how to swim."

Old Nurse (to newly married couple, after viewing the wedding presents)—Well, my dears, you ought to be very 'appy. There ain't a thing amongst 'em as a pawnbroker wouldn't be pleased to 'andle.

Slow train, local time. Dispute between passenger and guard. Guard—Well, sir. I've been on this train, boy and man, for thirty-five years. Bitter Passenger—Good heavens, man, what station did you get in at?

"Yeh," said Tommy, "pa gave me a watch to carry when I started in at school this fall. "My!" exclaimed Aunt Jane, "that's nice, isn't it?" "Yes'm; 'cause as soon as I git in school in the mornin's I kin look at it an' see how many minutes I'm late."

Mrs. Sharp—Have you filed those divorce papers for me? If so, I want you to stop them at once. Lawyer—Have you made it up with your husband? Mrs. Sharp—Good gracious, no! But he's just been run over and killed by a motor car, and I want to sue the owner for damages.

Teacher—I wonder what your mother would say if she knew how backward you are in geography? Girl—Oh, my mother says she never learnt jogfry, and she's married, and Aunt Sally says she never learnt jogfry and she's married; and you did and you ain't.

LUCKY JOE BROWN

—OR—

THE SMARTEST BOY IN NEW YORK

By J. P. RICHARDS

(A serial story)

CHAPTER I.

A BOY FROM LITTLE INDIAN.

Joe Brown did not run away from home.

Joe walked boldly to the station, paid his fare to New York like a little man, and rode away in the train.

The reason why Joe left Little Indian, Schoharie County, New York, was not because his father died and his mother gave him a cruel stepfather who beat and abused him; not because he was a poor orphan left in charge of a cruel uncle; not because he was bound apprentice to a hard master who abused and starved him.

No; it was none of these things.

Joe never had either father, mother, sister, brother, uncle or aunt, so far as he knew.

Tradition in Little Indian had it that the boy dressed in expensive clothing at the age of two or three, was found one day locked in an empty freight car which happened to be opened at Little Indian.

As he could give no account of himself, not being able to talk intelligibly, it was impossible to find out who he was or how he came there.

So the station agent took him and later he was advertised in New York, Albany and Buffalo papers, but no one ever wrote in answer to the "ad."

After that Joe was passed about from house to house as the village foundling, so to speak.

The station agent gave him to the doctor. The doctor kept him till his wife died and he gave up his house and went to boarding when he handed Joe over to the shoemaker's wife, who kept him until the boy was ten years old.

Then the shoemaker died and his wife went away to her people leaving Joe in charge of the grocer, who kept him until he was fourteen when he shifted again because the grocer's wife was always complaining of the cost of his keep, and went to live with the butcher, for whom he worked until the good man died.

That was when Joe was seventeen, and it brings us up or down to within a year of the date of his departure.

That was Joe's knockabout year.

Nobody wanted him now, and there was so little doing in Little Indian that the boy found it mighty hard to scratch a living, and that was the one and only reason why he left for New York.

He was not sorry to go because he had outgrown the town and all the friends he ever cared for were

either dead or had gone away ahead of him. It began by a drummer pumping him full of the glories and big chances of the metropolis.

But not a word did this fool drummer say about the great army of boys of all nations who are constantly seeking jobs in New York.

Joe Brown was smart—very smart—and in the end he was destined to establish himself in business in New York most successfully.

But our tale is to deal principally with the strange series of lucky happenings which befell its hero after he hit the city of the Great White Way.

If Joe had not been just as smart as he was he would not have been able to turn his luck to the advantage he did.

Some people complain of never coming up against good luck, but it has always seemed to us an open question if such people have been smart enough to recognize lucky opportunities when they met them coming down the pike.

Joe certainly was.

We believe that Joe Brown actually was at his time the smartest boy in New York.

Joe's good luck began with bad luck, if we may so put it.

He had been a saving fellow, and he brought with him away from Little Indian a modest roll—about sixty dollars.

He also had a cheap dress-suit case made of plaited straw, while his clothes were strictly of the "Rube" order.

He looked like a boy who had blown in from "Wayback," and so he had.

Joe blew in by way of the Erie railroad, and some fool on the train told him that it would be better for a boy like him to look up a cheap hotel in Jersey City instead of crossing the ferry to New York.

So Joe went out on Erie street, and started to look for a hotel in one of the very worst neighborhoods in Jersey City, where there are no hotels of any kind.

It was about nine o'clock at night in the month of September. It had been raining in torrents all day, and now the fog had blown in and the boy could hardly see his way about.

He walked on as far as Grove street, and seeing no hotel sign, ventured to inquire of a young man who was standing near a saloon.

"What's dat you say?" demanded the young man. "Want a cheap hotel? Why, soitenly. Dere's one just around de corner. Come wit me."

Joe often wondered afterward how he could have been so green.

The young man led him to a dark doorway.

"Upstairs here is what you want, Rube," he said.

Joe pulled back.

"This can't be a hotel," he replied. "You are fooling me."

But the blunder had been already made, and Joe was "up against it."

Suddenly the young man seized his arm.

(To be continued.)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

GIRL'S PICTURE SAVES LIFE.

A metal picture case carrying his sweetheart's likeness is credited with saving the life of Lieut. Edward Kester, according to a letter received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Kester, of Everett, Wash. The letter was written from the hospital, where the young man is recovering from his wound. Kester went over with the 91st Division Infantry, and evidently he went over the top with them, for he says, a machine gun bullet made the wound. He was carried to a dressing station by four German prisoners.

GUM STOPS GAS LEAK.

When it comes to resourcefulness leave it to Mrs. Ernest Byfield and Miss Elaine V. Rosenthal, embryo motor mechanics who are fitting themselves for service in the Motor Supply Corps, Chicago, Ill.

A little thing like a gas tank leak is nothing to them, even if it does happen way out on a country road. So when they were motoring along and had to stop because of it. Mrs. Byfield suggested that chewing gum would stop the leak, since they had nothing better. It did, but they had to chew 110 sticks, which they purchased at a nearby store, to get the desired effect. Yes, they could still talk and tell about it when they got back despite the stiffness of their jaws.

NEUTRAL COUNTRIES.

British newspapers comment on the fact that considerable anxiety is being displayed by the German capitalist classes in efforts to evade the war charges facing their country. The wealthier Germans are said to be transferring large amounts of money to neutral countries.

"The Times" and other London papers declare that the Allied governments will not allow chicanery of this sort to interfere with any rightful demands which they may make upon German resources. This is declared to be realized by financiers in neutral countries, who look upon the manoeuvres of the German capitalists with suspicion.

WISE OLD DOG.

The cat that came back has nothing on Knight, the bulldog owned by the children of Mr. and Mrs. John Gray of Mystic, Conn., for the cat, when she came back, had to hike in the old-fashioned way, while Knight utilizes modern methods.

The family formerly resided in Noank, seven or eight miles from their present home, and there Knight was brought when a puppy. Since the family has moved to Mystic, the dog at times evinces homesickness for the old place and a number of times has taken French leave and gone back to see it.

He will "visit" with the new tenants of the place

until taken back and put aboard the car and sent home. Several times he has been watched, but he never displays any interest in his surroundings or the trolley stations until he hears Noank called.

For several days Mrs. Anna Wells of Little Creek, N. H., observed that the cistern pump in her kitchen worked hard and only threw a small stream of water. Finally she could get no water at all.

When Mr. Wells came to dinner she told him of her trouble. He took the pump apart and found the valve clogged with pennies, dimes and nickels. They were removed, the pump adjusted and it works as good as ever.

The Wells have a parrot which is given the freedom of the house. During the afternoon Mrs. Wells saw the parrot perched upon the pump handle. She watched it and saw the bird drop a penny into the pump.

Mrs. Wells says that for a year she has kept pennies, dimes and other change in an open dish and that the parrot was stealing them and dropping them into the pump. She now keeps her loose change under cover where Polly can't find it.

DWARFING TEXAS.

It is the northeastern part of Japan that is celebrated for its success in dwarfing trees. There for centuries it had been deemed the highest taste on the part of householders to display about their dwellings such trees, forming miniature patches of exquisite landscape. For some years the American taste for Japanese dwarfed trees has been increasing, and those imported from the island empire bring good prices. At one sale six hundred trees brought nearly \$10,000. A maple about forty inches in height was sold for \$117. Pines in Japan are considered to be the most important of dwarf trees and great care is taken in their cultivation and preservation. They are generally grown from seed. It is said to take about ten years for the effectual dwarfing of a pine. From the second year, when the trees are about eight inches in height, the training into the desired shapes is carried on. The plants are tied with rice straw to bamboo canes and are bent into different forms. Not until the seventh year is this process varied. Then the trees are potted, the pots being about a foot and a half in diameter. Great care must be taken for the next three years to keep young shoots pinched back. American gardeners, studying the Japanese method, have, it is said, evolved a system somewhat of their own, and one experimenter has asserted that he could grow a whole forest in a bedroom without crowding the furniture. While the Japanese confine their efforts largely to evergreens, Americans have dwarfed deciduous trees.

On account of the war, dealers cannot get any of the novelties advertised in back numbers of this magazine. Do not order any goods except those advertised in the current numbers.

TWO CARD MONTE.

This famous trick gets them all. You pick up a card and when you look at it you find you haven't got the card you thought you had. Price 10c. by mail, postpaid.

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4	3	4	7
8	9	8	8
7	4	7	8

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A very handsome fountain pen case to which is attached a pocket holder neatly made of metal and highly nickel-plated. When your friend desires the use of your pen and gets it, he is very much astonished when he removes the cap by the sudden and loud noise of the explosion that occurs, and yet a little paper cap does it all. Price 35c. by mail, postpaid.

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ADAM'S TEASER PUZZLE.

This is a nut cracker. The way to do it is as follows: Turn the top of the two small loops toward you, taking hold of the two large loops with each hand. Hold firm the loop held with the left hand and pull the other toward the right, and at the same time impart a twisting motion away from you. You can get the rest of the directions with the puzzle. Price 12 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

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THE JOKE SPIKE.



This joke spike is an ordinary iron spike or very large nail, the same as is found in any carpenter's nail box. At the small end is a small steel needle, 1/2 inch in length, firmly set in spike. Take your friend's hat or coat and hang it on the wall by driving (with a hammer) the spike through it into the wall; the needle in spike will not injure the hat or garment, neither will it show on wall or wood where it has been driven. The deception is perfect, as the spike appears to have been driven half-way through the hat or coat, which can be left hanging on the wall. Price, 10 cents, or 3 for 25 cents; by mail, postpaid.
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WILLARD-JOHNSON PRIZE-FIGHT PUZZLE.



Four strips of cardboard, each three inches by one and a half inches, showing Willard and Johnson in various absurd postures. The solution in the puzzle lies in so arranging the strips that they show Willard in the complete picture, the heavy-weight champion. Price 10c. by mail, postpaid, with directions.
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Consists of one horizontal and one perpendicular piece of highly-polished metal bent in such a manner that when assembled it seems utterly impossible to get them apart, but by following the directions it is very easily accomplished. This one is a brain twister. Price 10c by mail, postpaid, with directions.

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HJALMAR NELSON, (address on application), whose photo appears at the left, learned of a book and other information being given **FREE**, explaining how Tobacco Habit can be conquered by oneself, safely, speedily and completely. He obtained the information and is now able to report a gain of 25 pounds in weight (from 163 to 188 pounds), as well as

A THREE DAYS' VICTORY OVER SLAVERY TO TOBACCO HABIT

HERE are more letters—voluntary testimonials. Though they are a small fraction of the thousands and thousands that can be produced, they are sufficient to show you what may be expected after the Tobacco Habit is overcome within 72 hours, by the simple Woods Method:

"While addicted to the tobacco habit, every muscle and joint ached, and I had almost given up business. I was poor in health, weighing about 130 pounds. Now I am well, weigh 165 pounds, and can work every day. I have never wanted to chew or smoke since following the Woods method."—A. F. Shelton, (No. 199600), Pittsylvania Co., Va. (Full address on application.)

"I have no craving for tobacco; this I consider wonderful after having used a pipe for 35 years. I have gained 12 pounds in two months, which is very good at the age of 59 years. To say that the benefits far exceed my expectations, is putting it mildly. Anyone in doubt can refer to me."—John Brodie, (No. 153235), Wapello Co., Iowa. (Full address on application.)

"I had weighed as low as 128 pounds, never got over 135 while I used tobacco. Now I weigh 156 pounds. Everyone wants to know why I got so fleshy; I tell them to follow Edward J. Woods' method for overcoming tobacco and find out."—W. S. Morgan, (No. 11815 K), Cooke Co., Tex. (Full address on application.)

"I smoked for more than 20 years but now I am proud to say that for the past nine months I have no crave for smoking; I feel better and am gaining in weight every month since I stopped."—William Crawford, (No. 206737), Philadelphia Co., Penna. (Full address on application.)

"May God bless you. I am feeling finer every day of my life—not like the same person. "My appetite is better, and my stomach is all right. I can hold out in walking better, my voice is better and my heart is stronger."—Mrs. Mattie E. Stevenson, (No. 230738), St. John Co., Fla. (Full address on application.)

"Have used tobacco in all forms (mostly chewing) for 15 years, using about a plug of tobacco a day. I began following your Method on a Friday noon and after that day the craving for tobacco was gone. I am always ready to praise you and the good work you are doing. I can also say that I have gained nine pounds in seven weeks, and feel like a new man."—Robert S. Brown, (No. 229852) Worcester Co., Mass. (Full address on application.)

"My husband hasn't smoked a single cigarette, and has no desire to smoke since following your method of quitting. He looks like a new man—the best I ever saw him. He gained seventeen pounds, and is feeling fine."—Mrs. Carl C. Rogers, (No. 224360), Iredell Co., North Carolina. (Full address on application.)

"I was using about one pound and a half of chewing tobacco a week, but since quitting through your system, I have gained about 15 pounds, and have better health by far, than before."—W. S. Powell No. 139149, Harper Co., Okla. (Full address on application.)

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO QUIT TOBACCO QUICKLY AND EASILY AND ENJOY YOURSELF A THOUSAND TIMES BETTER WHILE IN ROBUST HEALTH?

STOP RUINING YOUR LIFE.

Why continue to commit slow suicide, when you can live a really contented life, if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid oneself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will power"—don't do it.

The correct way is to eliminate nicotine poison from the system, and genuinely overcome the craving.

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures the health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas belching, gnawing or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach, constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, heart failure, melancholy, lung trouble, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver, loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco or snuff.

Here is an opportunity to receive **FREE** a carefully compiled treatise on the subject, containing interesting and valuable information that you should be glad to learn about. This book tells all about the renowned Three Days' Method by which Mr. Nelson, and thousands and thousands of others, saved themselves from the life-wrecking tobacco habit. Full particulars, including the book on tobacco and snuff habit, will be mailed **FREE TO YOU** in plain wrapper, postpaid. All you need do is merely **REQUEST IT**. A postcard will do. Address

FREE



"I sleep well and have no more restless or nervous feeling. I am past seventy-eight years of age, and feel fine since adopting the Woods Method."

—John P. Monter (Photo above)
Civil War Veteran

(Full address on application.)

Edward J. Woods, WA-103, Station F, New York, N.Y.

FREE! I WAS BALD

Got New Growth of Hair by
Indian's Recipe

Will Send It Free

I am a business man. At the age of 66 I have a superb hair growth where formerly I was bald.

I was told by an eminent expert that never could any hair grow because the roots were extinct.

A Cherokee Indian "medicine man" proved to me that the roots of my hair were yet alive after having been imbedded in my scalp like bulbs or seeds in a bottle, needing only proper fertilizing. This is said often to be the case with persons who imagine they are permanently bald.

To my amazement and joy new hair grew all over the spot that had been bare.

The recipe I am willing to send free to you if you enclose a stamp for return postage. Address: John Hart Brittain, 150 East Thirty-second St., (BB-103) New York, N. Y.

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D.D.D.

The Standard Skin Remedy

D. D. D. is the logical remedy. It is a penetrating liquid. It works its way right into the tiny pores where the disease germs are lodged, and cleanses them of impurities. The relief is instant. As soon as you apply D. D. D. to that burning, itching, it will bring cool comfort and rest. Now you can get D. D. D. in a small trial bottle. Write today. Hundreds of grateful people all over the world are recommending it to their friends. Prove to yourself that what others say is true, but don't wait. Get instant relief.

Write Today For Free Trial Bottle

Do this today. For a limited time only we will make this offer. We do it because we know that D. D. D. will do the same for you that it has done for others. Send for D. D. D. and as soon as you apply it to that burning itch it will bring instant relief. Enclose 10 cents to cover cost of packing and mailing. Send today without fail.

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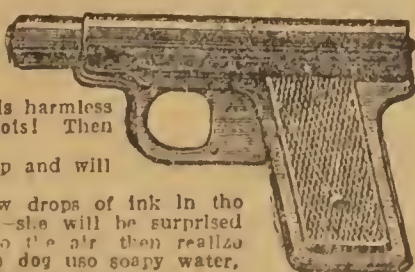


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FREE—5 Shooter



The Son-of-a-Gun is verily a very much alive young shooter. It is harmless and does not emit bullets but squirts of water—five rapid-fire shots! Then

A sharp squirt of water has a tingle that will make a rowdy jump and will cause a dog to run away howling.

If you are going gunning for some scamp, you might put a few drops of ink in the water. If you do this at a lively meal, try a little perfume—she will be surprised. Shoot a cat with milk. The feline will leap into the air then realize she has been fooled and be happy! For a troublesome dog use soapy water, and he will be the victim of the squirt.

The Son-of-a-Gun can be used to deter and spoil; it will keep in good condition for rapid-fire shooting, and is easy to keep clean.

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DON'T send a penny. Just send your name and say: "Send me a Lachnite mounted in a solid gold ring on 10 days' free trial." We will send it prepaid right to your home. When it comes merely deposit \$4.75 with the postman and then wear the ring for 10 full days. If you, or if any of your friends can tell it from a diamond, send it back. But if you decide to buy it—send us \$2.50 a month until \$18.75 has been paid.

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